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CHARTERIS.

A ROMANCE.

BY

MARY M. MELINE,

AUTHOR OF "MONTARGE'S LEGACY," "IN SIX MONTHS."

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TO

MY FRIEND.

"When adversities flow,
Then love ebbs: but friendship standeth stiffly
In storms. Time draws wrinkles in a fair
Face, but addeth fresh colors to a fast
Friend, which neither heat, nor cold, nor misery,
Nor place, nor destiny, can alter or
Diminish. O friendship! of all things the
Most rare, and therefore most rare, because most
Excellent; whose comforts in misery
Are always sweet, and whose counsels in
Prosperity are ever fortunate."

WASHINGTON, March 22, 1874.

CHARTERIS.

BOOK FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

"Hi! Shott, old fellow! Catch it, sir! Easy! tally-ho! Why, did I wake you up, old boy?"

The dog, a setter, with silken hair of a tawny color, and breast, feet, and tip of tail a dainty white,—larger than those of his breed generally are,—had been lying asleep at the speaker's feet; and sleeping he had dreamed, for his paws were moved restlessly, and he whined and panted. At the sound of his master's voice he was up in an instant, a little bewildered at first, but recognizing the situation immediately; in token of which, he planted his fore-paws upon the rustic seat and hung over the gentleman who lay upon it, very much as if he would like to find a place alongside of him.

"There, there, you were not meant for a lap-dog, and cannot be looked upon as one for a moment! Down, sir!"

The dog obeyed; curled himself up again, with a long sigh, at his master's feet; and doubtless was soon happy in his dreams of successful hunts once more.

Guy Charteris arranged the cushions into a more convenient prop for his head, and, sinking back upon them,

replaced his cigar, and began to pull out the tangled curls of his brown hair, gazing in an abstracted mood at the peaceful heavens, where the moon, nearly full, lay like a pearl in a sea of sapphire. He was not strikingly handsome, but there was something very fascinating in his face,—something that made one trust him and love him almost unconsciously. In the full prime of life, he had all the world at his feet. A large fortune, a good old name, and a rank among the highest and best in the land, although he bore no title. Indeed, Charteris, of Charteris Manor, was a name and a family long, long before many a noble and titled one of the present day had been heard of.

And Charteris Manor was a goodly heritage, situated in one of the fairest and most picturesque regions of fair and picturesque Devonshire, the ocean-breakers tossing their white manes upon the beach, whose line of sand was all that divided them from the oaks and elms of the park at its western extremity. The manor-house had been built in the reign of bluff King Hal. Partly destroyed in that of the first James, it was rebuilt only to suffer again in the days of the Cavaliers; for the Charteris of that time fought loyally for his king, and was, in his old age, one of the few whom that king's son remembered when he came to his own. Rebuilt after the Restoration, in the architectural style of those days, since then, from time to time, a gable or a wing had been added, until, at the period at which our story opens, the original plan was lost.

But whatever might have appeared incongruous, owing to these additions, was softened and toned down, in fact, concealed, by the luxuriant ivy, which, like to the charity which covereth a multitude of sins, had crept from base to roof, and, save that here a gable and there a tower crept out from its dark-green leaves, completely cloaked the gray stone walls.

The house stood on a hill, surrounded on three sides by the trees of the park, which grew quite close to it, except in front, where an open space had been cleared for a carriage-sweep, and to afford sunlight for my lady's flowers.

Back of the house, from the terrace at the end of which was Mrs. Charteris' morning-room, the lawn sloped to a broad, rather shallow river, which, winding between low, wooded banks, made a wide detour, from east to west, and emptied into the sea, forming the boundary on the north between Charteris and Brandon Towers. A railroad passed through a distant part of the estate to the south, and Charteris Station, about three miles away, was reached by a road from the park-gates, the distance thence to the mansion being nearly two miles.

But the crowning glories of his life, in Guy Charteris' own estimation, were his beautiful wife, as tenderly loved and as loving now as when eight years ago she first promised to be his, and his boy, the pride and darling of his heart.

As he lay back there among his cushions, looking up into the calm night sky, if one of the fairies, who, according to our childish story-books, appear at opportune moments to grant poor mortals' wishes, had poised herself upon the overhanging spray of a rich chrysanthemum which stood upon a flower-stand near, and begged him to tell her what earthly wish was unfulfilled, he could not have mentioned one.

A happy man!

Presently a lady stepped out of one of the open windows and approached him. He rose to make room for her on the bench beside him, but she did not take the seat thus offered; standing close to him, she leaned her cheek upon his curls and slipped a little hand into his.

"Well, have you seen your nestling safe for the night, Lady-Bird?" he asked, looking fondly up at her and drawing her down upon his knee. "Are you sure no chilling air can reach him? that no fly can light upon his nose? and that every feather in his bed is laid the right way? that nurse will not set fire to his crib? or——"

"Oh, don't, Guy, don't! Suppose something *should* happen,—suppose we should lose him! Don't jest about it, dear! I cannot bear the thought!"

Her voice roused the dog, who came and laid his beautiful head on his mistress' lap, looking up at her with his soft, intelligent eyes, and wagging his heavily fringed tail slowly, thus mutely expressing his sympathy in whatever trouble there might be.

She patted the noble head, and her husband replied, "Then I will not, dear. But what do you propose to do when Lady Emmeline Stuart, Cecilia Morton, and Sir John Fordyce come next week? Master Guy's claims will have to be in abeyance then, for these folks cannot be put off as easily as I am."

"As you are! But I scorn to notice such an allegation." Then she sighed, as she ran her fingers through his heavy curls. "I know we must do our duty by society and all that, but I'd rather be *tête-à-tête* a little longer, Guy."

"You hypocrite!" he exclaimed, laughing. "When they do come, how you'll kiss and hug the ladies, and tell Sir John you hope he proposes a long visit! You know how you women do these things."

"We women! And will you tell me how I am to avoid acting the part you blame? I cannot tell them I am *not* glad to see them! Besides, in a measure, I *am* glad. I am only sorry our *tête-à-têtes* will not be so frequent. After all, sir, who invited them? Didn't you

ask Sir John? and didn't *you* suggest Cecilia Morton? To try your hand at match-making, I suppose! What could I do but ask them to come?"

"True, you are right. I acknowledge my share in the matter. Do you know we will have a new neighbor soon?"

"No; who?"

"Gilbert Forrester."

"Oh!"

"He has just returned from India. That little 'oh' didn't sound as if you would give him a very cordial welcome. Have you not yet overcome your dislike to poor Gilbert?"

"Dislike! Guy, it is not dislike,—it is an antipathy that no amount of reasoning can overcome! I feel his return to England bodes us no good."

"You foolish child! Do you know I was about to invite him here?"

"Here! Guy!"

"Why not? He is coming down next week to see what can be done towards making the old Towers habitable. He has made quite a fortune in India. Aside from his love of wine, I think we would find him an intelligent companion, and I expect he will have much of interest to relate of his life in that far country."

"Guy! Guy Charteris! Gilbert Forrester never crosses the threshold of the house that calls me mistress, if I can prevent it! He is not a man,—he is a cold, cruel, heartless fiend!"

"There! there! Don't get excited for nothing, little girl! He shall not come if you feel so about it!" replied Mr. Charteris, looking into her face in amused amazement. "But you ought to try to overcome this antipathy. Gilbert is your own first cousin; your only blood-relation

after your uncle. He will be your uncle's heir, and if any thing should happen to me——"

"Don't leave me to the mercy of Gilbert Forrester, Guy! Promise me,—oh, promise me that!"

"I do,—I do, Clare. I am sorry I spoke of the matter at all, since you have excited yourself so much. There, let us go in; I see Benson has lighted up, and look, he comes back with what seems like a telegram."

He rose, and still keeping his arm around his wife, led her towards the low French window of her morning-room, where the butler stood awaiting them, holding in his hand an envelope.

Mr. Charteris opened the dispatch, and his wife read it over his arm. It was but a few words from Sir Robert Forrester's physician, stating that the baronet had had a stroke, and asking Mr. Charteris to hurry to him. Clare took the dispatch out of her husband's hand as he turned to the butler and gave him directions for Roger, his valet, to prepare for the journey.

"I must catch the next train. Let me see," looking at his watch,—"it is just half-past nine; the train stops at the station at 10.15; there is no time to lose."

"Oh, Guy, do you think it is very bad?" asked Clare, her soft eyes full of tears.

"How can I tell, love? You know Dr. Snowden said, when he had the last attack, he feared your uncle would not survive another."

"Dear, dear uncle! I may never see him again!"

"You shall if it is possible, Clare. I will telegraph you in the morning, and if—if he is conscious, or—there is no reason against it,—you can join me; or, if Gilbert Forrester arrives, I will return for you."

"Guy, I wish you were not going!"

"So do I, Clare; but you see it cannot be helped. I

want you to promise me that you will go to bed quietly, and that you will not worry. Will you?"

"I'll try, dear; but——"

He kissed her and left the room. The dog had followed them from the terrace, and now, as his mistress turned towards the window and leaned against the frame looking out, he came and stood very close to her, thrusting his head under her hand. She stood there playing with the long silken ears until her husband returned.

He came up and put his arm around her waist, and together they remained for a few seconds silently looking out into the perfect stillness of the night. Then he turned her face up to his.

"Good-by, darling. What, tears, foolish one! There!" he kissed her eyes. "Now, Birdie, it is time to say good-by,—remember your promise."

"Guy! Guy! take me with you!" she cried out, and threw her arms around his neck.

"What! And leave the boy?"

"I cannot help it, dear; I have such a sad presentiment of trouble," she said, clinging to him. "What would I do if I were to lose you?"

"Don't be foolish, Birdie, over a six-hours' ride on the railroad. We know every mile of the way, and have been over it so often."

"Still, something——"

"When the skies fall we'll catch larks," he answered, gayly. "Now, Clare, my darling, be reasonable; go to bed and quiet yourself by a good night's rest, for——"

The rest of the sentence he whispered in her ear. As he did so a slight color rose to her pale cheeks, and she unclasped her arms from around his neck.

The dog-cart was announced ready, and they walked around the house to the entrance where it stood. The

moon was by this time below the trees, which considerably obscured her light, but the lamps were lighted each side of the door and in the hall.

Bidding his wife a last good-by, Guy mounted the vehicle. Clare stood on the steps in the full light of the lamps as he turned again to wave his hand, and the ponies started. They had gone but a few paces when one of the grooms stopped them to speak to the master, and as he did so, he held his lantern up, revealing Guy's face clearly to his wife's gaze. Then the cart rattled towards the gate, and Clare turned into the house and sought her nursery, with the undefinable presentiment of evil still strong in her heart.

CHAPTER II.

LEAVING Guy Charteris to his night's ride, leaving Clare kneeling at her boy's bedside, sobbing out her grief and excitement, turn we to London.

The night that was so calmly beautiful down in Devonshire is far otherwise there. It rains in London, a steady, slow, persistent pour, as if it meant to rain a week.

In a coffee-house in a quiet, respectable, though not fashionable, part of the city, a man was sitting. Before him, on one of the little tables, was a simple meal.

The man, whom we shall call George Robson, was carefully, though poorly, dressed, as if he were making the most of a meagre wardrobe. No one, looking at him once, would have been attracted to repeat their gaze, drawn by any personal beauty. He appeared prematurely old, care-worn, and sad. His hair was turning quite gray, and beginning to wear off the temples, and his gray eyes

had a furtive look in them when he raised them, which was seldom, for he seemed to fear meeting the gaze of any other eyes; and if by chance the merest stranger looked at him long, he grew restless and uneasy.

There was a nervous twitching of his full lips that showed his weakness more decidedly. He was not actually a bad or a cruel man—on the contrary, children and animals loved him; but he was weak, and had been selfish, and thence had come his great undoing. Led away by the influence of a man who at first professed a warm friendship for him, but whose object was to use him as he saw he could be used,—a man who was cold, heartless, and cruel,—he had fallen first into folly, then into crime. He had held a commission as a surgeon in the army, and was considered as possessed of fine talents. But he had been degraded, and dismissed the service. From that his course had been steadily downward. The friend who had helped him to his ruin kept track of him for some time in England, and at length he went to India, but his tormentor followed him there, and they were together many years.

About eighteen months previous to this September evening, a letter, written by his mother just before her death, reached him after many wanderings. He had received the news of her death previously, and this letter seemed truly like a message from the grave. It was full of eloquent pleading, such as only a true mother could write, and it touched the one vulnerable point in his otherwise hardened nature.

Under the influence of the promptings of this better spirit, he managed to escape from the toils so dexterously thrown around him, and returned to England.

Victor Hugo says, we all have angels' wings in us, if they could only expand. God only knows what the result would have been had George Robson been left to his

better nature, had the angel's wings been allowed to show themselves; but!——

As he sat at the little table, the door of the room opened, and a stranger entered.

He was a tall man, and handsome, so far as regularity of features went, but there was a coldness in the glitter of the light-blue eye and a hardness in the curve of the thin lips that no change in the face ever softened. Heaven help the poor wretch who found himself in his power!

He carried an umbrella, and was dressed handsomely, but warmly, even for this chilly evening, wearing an overcoat lined and edged with fur.

As the door opened to admit this figure, Robson looked up. For an instant he gazed in mute astonishment; then, muttering an oath, hastily put on his hat and drew it over his eyes, and, picking up the paper over which he had been glancing, held it in front of him.

The new-comer gave his order, and sauntered down the room. At first he was not attracted by the man who sat with his hat drawn over his face; he passed quite close to him, and would have gone on but for a sudden quick, shrinking movement involuntarily made by Robson, which the stranger seemed to recognize. He paused, looked at the figure, then laid his hand heavily on its shoulder.

"Unless I am very much mistaken, we have met before, sir."

Robson did not speak or look up. The paper fell from his hands, and they writhed in a peculiar manner.

"Yes, I am right!" continued the stranger, seating himself, resting his umbrella against the chair next him, and drawing off his gloves. "This is my old friend and ally (a stress on the last word), who left India so suddenly a few months ago! How interesting that paper must have been! See, you had it upside-down! Why, man, have

you no welcome for me? You ought to be glad—devilish glad—to see me; we are such *old* friends, you know."

There was the concentration of a thousand sneers in his voice, and his victim writhed as if in the toils of a boa-constrictor.

"Gilbert Forrester!" he said, at last, in a low but intense tone, through his clinched teeth. "I thought—I hoped—never to look upon your face again! Why, in the devil's name, did you hunt me out? I can't help you any more; can't you let me alone?"

The tone of his voice was fierce with anger at first; at the last words it subsided into one querulous and weak, and the thin hands rubbed over each other in an aimless way.

"You hoped never to see me again! Ha! ha! ha! Bring me a glass—two glasses—of brandy-and-water." This to the waiter, who approached at this moment with what he had ordered at first entering.

"Doubtless," he continued, "the sight of me does not recall very pleasant memories, and I did not know you were trying to play Johnny Goodboy. 'Why, in the devil's name, did I hunt you out?' Now, if you really are trying the reform dodge, the devil is an ugly name to swear by, and I fear if the shepherd who has been rejoicing over a lamb that was lost and found, and has held you up metaphorically to a gaping congregation as a brand snatched from the burning, heard you, he would begin to think you backsliding. But, for the *sake of old times*, I'll set your mind at rest. I did not hunt you out. I have not thought much about you, knowing that I could find you at any time if I really wanted you. Still, now I have met you, I am glad, and will take your address. Such old friends as you and I will have much to talk about."

During this speech Robson turned white and then ashy

gray, and bit his lip till the blood came. At last he gasped out, "What devil's work are you up to now? Didn't you—you——" He paused and looked into the other's face. His companion was regarding him calmly with a smile on his lips, but with a look in his eye that made Robson shrink up, as it were, and wither into an old man as he sat there. Presently wetting his white lips with his tongue, he finished the sentence, "Didn't you *earn* enough money in India?"

"Earn is a good word, *mon cher*, a very good word. I was sure your fertile brain would suggest a *safe* one. Try and be always as circumspect in your language, and we will not quarrel on that head at least. Yes, I did *earn* enough money in India for the present, and I don't think my old uncle can hold out much longer. When it shall please him to shuffle off this mortal coil I will be glad. I don't know that I am 'up to any devil's work now,' as you elegantly express it; still, circumstances may arise in which your valuable aid might be required. You have not forgotten your studies in toxicology pursued in India with such ardor?" He asked the question for the simple delight of seeing his victim writhe in his toils.

"Heavens! you do not contemplate murder again?"

"*Again?* that implies that I have done so *before!* Don't use the word in the same connection any more, or it will be the worse for you. If you had been overheard it might have led to ugly results. *Remember, you have no evidence against me*, but I have that in *my* possession that would hang you high as Haman!"

These words were spoken in a whisper close to the other's ears, who recoiled as though a snake had shaken its rattles in the same proximity. The whole conversation had been carried on in a tone too low to reach any of the customers who were scattered around the room. And

Gilbert Forrester, no matter how vehement his words were in tone, had kept his facial muscles under wonderful control.

"Have you been down to——"

"See my uncle? Of course. Then I kept on to Devon, to look at that valuable maternal inheritance of mine,—Brandon Towers."

"Did you see Mrs. Charteris?"

"My precious cousin Clare? No, damn her! nor want to. I have not seen her since a certain interview we had ten years ago, before I went to India. When I reached Brandon I found that, thanks to my ten-years' absence and this heavy beard, I was not recognized. So, in view of probable contingencies, I did not reveal myself. I found the Towers in rather a dilapidated condition, and that it enjoyed the reputation of being haunted. The woods around it are thick, and none of the country people will set foot within the shadow of the trees after nightfall, and not willingly in the day-time. I don't think I could induce one of them to climb the hill on which the building stands for a fortune. But I have forgotten, in the pleasure of this meeting, an engagement I had. You were doubtless surprised to see me in this part of the city; it is not often I find myself here, nor am I fond of exposing myself to this wretched climate,—if it is cold enough to make furs comfortable now, what will it be in December? But first give me your address. Thank you; now I shall say good-by, promising myself the pleasure of calling at your quarters in a short time."

He put the slip of paper on which Robson had written his address in his pocket, and rose from the table. Drawing his furred overcoat more closely around him, and buttoning it up, he put on his hat and, airily kissing the tips of his fingers, saying, "*Au plaisir de vous revoir*," left the house.

The miserable man from whom he parted watched him till he closed the door, then, folding his arms on the table, rested his head on them, murmuring, while an expression of dull misery settled over his features,—

"Lost! Lost!"

And the recording angel, as he folded his book over the record of the day's deeds, echoed with sad cadence,—

"Lost! Lost!"

CHAPTER III.

A FEW evenings after the interview mentioned in the last chapter, George Robson sat in his rooms in gloomy meditation.

They were comfortable apartments, on the first floor, in a respectable neighborhood. He had taken much pleasure in fitting them up, the back room as a bedroom, the front as part office, part sitting-room. A book-case, containing his modest medical library, an office-table, some chairs, a music-stand, upon which lay a flute, and some fine engravings, completed the furniture; over the mantel hung a photograph of that marvel of ancient sculpture, the Laocöon,—how aptly chosen, it seemed, in his present mood!

Hopeful visions had come before him, as he found himself getting more and more into practice, of a quiet, useful, if not so happy a life as he had once thought to live; one in which, by doing all in his power to relieve the sufferings of his fellow-mortals, he hoped to retrieve, and, if possible, to atone for, the past.

In his youthful days, when life and hope were fresh

before him, he had entered into the study of medicine with elevated ideas of the power for good which lies in a physician's hands, and of the responsibilities which the profession involved. These feelings had, in a measure, returned in the last few months. But the golden visions of a peaceful future were all gone now, dispelled by the words of Gilbert Forrester in that short hour in the coffee-house. If he had not gone to that place that night! It was pure accident which took him there. Visiting a patient that afternoon, he found it necessary to remain much longer than he had intended, to watch some particular symptom and the effect of a certain medicine. Thus, the usual dinner-hour having passed, he stopped at the first eating-house he saw to satisfy his hunger. If he had not done so! If! if!

What undreamed-of meaning lies in those two little letters!

Presently there was a knock at the door, and the miserable man roused himself from his gloomy musings.

His visitor was Gilbert Forrester.

Robson turned away as soon as he recognized him, folded his arms and gazed moodily into the fire, without rising or uttering a word of greeting.

"By my faith! If I were not one of the most amiable of men I might really get angry. You are a most hospitable host. Have you forgotten all you used to know of the code of politeness? Not a word of greeting!"

"Why should I speak? You know I don't wish to see you; you would not go away if I bid you, and I will not ask you to stay. You have me in your power,—you will do as you please,—but you cannot force me to play the hypocrite."

"I cannot, eh? How long since? It would not be a new rôle to you. But a truce to such pleasantries. As you say, I

will do as I please; and I certainly would not go away if you bade me, for I am perfectly charmed with your nest. It is delightfully complete! I hope you have succeeded in obtaining customers,—patients, I should say. Perhaps they would have come more quickly had you advertised, 'late of his Majesty's —th,' eh? As our friends over the Channel say, '*Bonne renommée vaut mieux que ceinture dorée.*'"

"Gilbert Forrester, are you man or devil?" cried his victim, at length, springing up.

"Ah, you are waked up at last!" sneered Forrester, seating himself. "And it is evident," he continued, "you have not heard the latest intelligence in the fashionable world,—as how could you, living here,—or you would address me differently. You have the honor of speaking to *Sir* Gilbert Forrester. *Le roi est mort. Vive le roi!*"

"Well, are you satisfied?"

"Satisfied! Ten thousand devils,—no! Nor would you be. I am left nothing I could be robbed of. I suspected some such game long ago, but I did not dream of its being so successful! That pale-faced minx, my cousin Clare, has played her cards so well that all is left to her and her children; do you hear?—all. I couldn't be robbed of the title and the entailed estate,—but all else is gone. With the saving clause of reversion to me in case of her death and that of her immediate heirs. And now, can you guess what brought me here? I mean to have my revenge; I mean to make Clare Charteris disgorge her ill-gotten wealth, or suffer such anguish as mortal woman never suffered before; and I look to you to help me."

"I,—help you?"

"Yes."

"God in heaven! How?'

"Never mind the full particulars of my plan just now.

You can refuse your assistance,—of course you can refuse; but then, *you* know *the consequences*, and I don't think you will." He paused, and watched his victim for awhile in silence. Robson sat with his face hidden in his hands.

"Well?" Forrester asked, at length. "Well, are you ready to hear what I have to say?"

"Go on," muttered Robson, without changing his position.

"'Tis a pity to break up this cosy little establishment; but it must be. I want you to go down to Devonshire with me to-morrow."

"To-morrow?"

"Ay, to-morrow," he answered, slowly.

Again there was silence.

"Guy Charteris is in London. I dined with him to-day; have just left him to come here," continued Forrester.

The other shuddered.

"He is here making all necessary settlements in regard to his wife's bright new fortune, the bequest of my dear departed uncle. I told him I would be a neighbor of his before long; that I had sent my valet and housekeeper down to Brandon Towers to see to making a few rooms habitable. Now, he returns himself to Charteris Manor early next week, and my work must be done before he reaches home."

Robson made no answer.

"We start in the mid-day train; see that you don't play me false. I don't half trust you, Robson, since you have been trying to play Johnny Goodboy, and I'd find some one else to help me in this job, if I could; but from something Charteris said to-night, in speaking of his wife, I judge a physician might be needed in a hurry,—women's nerves, you know, are queer arrangements, and not to be

relied on under all circumstances. It is a fortunate thing that I can leave the train before we reach Charteris'; I find there is a station a couple of miles from the Towers, so all goes well for me. I need not be known as master of Brandon till I choose. Now, have you heard all I have said, and do you understand me?"

"Yes."

"So far, so good; see that you fully understand me to the last. Remember!"

"I shall remember."

"Then I will say good-night; and I must add, I never saw so churlish a host! I need not ask so devoted a follower of the Muses, so skillful a musician, if he has attended the opera lately. Have you seen La Rita as Rosina? She is charmingly piquante. So! *Buona sera, buona notte!*"

With a mocking laugh he closed the door and left the house. The laugh still lingered on his lips as he stepped out into the night and tripped lightly down the street, drawing on his gloves and humming the "*buona notte, buona sera*," he had flung so sneeringly at Robson on parting from him.

"My God! is there no escape?"

Robson sprang up and flung his arms above his head in wild despair. "Escape! none,—none but death! But what death could be worse than such a life as this? Ah! let it come! let it come to-night, and I will bless it!"

He seized his hat and rushed from the room and from the house. Instinctively his course was towards the river, and in a short time he found himself on the bridge, under the abbey walls.

The lights along it, and the crowds of people passing over the bridge, caused him to shrink into one of the

recesses, where, unobserved, he could look down upon the dark waters.

But a policeman, who had been attracted by his strange manner, followed him, and hung around the alcove, evidently mistrusting his intention.

Annoyed by this surveillance, he hurried across to the Surrey side, and wandered among the slums and greasy wharves, and gazed into the river, as many a poor wretch has done before, and will do again, thinking how soon the ills of life would be over could he but sink into the water and lie there forever,—could he but lie down upon the surface of the steadily-flowing river, fold his arms upon his breast, and be carried out and on—far off—anywhere —with only the quiet stars to know aught of his fate!

But he did not go further than thought. That strange clinging to life which is so strong in the breast of even the most miserable of us,—perhaps, too, the "dread of something after death, that makes us rather bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not off,"—bade him pause ere he took the fatal plunge.

Then he looked at the shipping, watched the tall masts that stood so clearly against the light which rose from the city the other side of the river, making a cloudy radiance against the sky, and the idea came to him to secrete himself on board some vessel bound to Australia, or, better still, to America, for there he would have a wider range; and never see England or his tormentor more.

But he began to feel a desperate despondency. It was his fate,—the punishment of his one so fearful sin,—and there was to be no escape from it. Go where he would, this man would find him out.

Find him out, and rivet his chains only tighter—unless! Oh, there was one way left him! He could give himself up into the hands of justice, and his tormentor with him!

One word from him, and Gilbert Forrester would stand to be tried for his life. What mattered it that he could not bring judgment upon him and avoid it himself? Could anything be more terrible than the present existence?

But the same love of living which held him back from the calm, dark waters of the river, restrained him here, and the poor creature turned and wandered off into the narrow streets, not knowing where he went, nor caring much.

So he roamed the whole night through, and when daylight broke he found himself very far away from his own quarters. Turning to retrace his steps, he began to think of all he had to do that day, and of the journey he had to take. Then his mind went back to other journeys he had taken from London into the wild Northumberland country, to the quiet parsonage, where his gentle mother and sisters had greeted his coming as a delight unequaled by any other event of the year. And he remembered the dignified pleasure his old father showed in his worldly advancement and success. And then—but he shuddered when he remembered the blow which had ended all—his deep disgrace—the death-stab to both his parents. He could not follow any further that train of thought. Then he began to think of what Gilbert Forrester meant to do down in Devonshire,—how he would carry out his plan, and what that plan was. He wondered what devilish torment was in contemplation for that fair, sweet creature whom he remembered so well in days that were gone,—how Forrester would manage to keep within the letter of the law; for, with all his villainies, he was very cunning, and took care to run no personal risks. Again came the despairing desire to escape from the toils, severed only to be riveted more strongly.

Thinking these things, he walked slowly home in the

gray of the morning, and, as he neared his house, he heard a moan issue from a covered way he passed. On investigating, he found a small dog, whose foot had been hurt severely, evidently causing much pain. It was a poor, miserable-looking little beast; but Robson took it up gently, and the dog seemed to know at once that it was in a friend's hands, and it displayed its confidence in every canine way. Reaching his rooms, Robson, after examining the dog's injury and alleviating its sufferings, threw himself on his bed, utterly overcome with fatigue, and, in spite of his troubled and despairing thoughts, slept heavily for some hours.

The dawn grew stronger, till, at length, the sun strove to pierce the London mist, and failed.

Down in Devonshire he shone with unclouded splendor over the newly-awakened earth; the trees whispered good-morning one to another, and each blade of grass, every fairy cobweb spun between them, glistened with diamond dew-drops.

Then, rising over the eastern woods, he threw a golden shimmer on the moaning sea, and gleamed with a fiery radiance upon the windows of Brandon Towers.

CHAPTER IV.

Guy Charteris did not send for his wife the next day, nor the next; neither did he come for her, for the old baronet died a few hours after Guy reached him, without a sign of recognition to any one.

Although he had been telegraphed for at the same time that the dispatch had been sent to Charteris, Gilbert For-

rester did not arrive until the afternoon of the next day, and Guy was detained making such arrangements as were necessary. Then the will was opened immediately after the funeral, and, to his great surprise, he learned the disposition the old man had made of his property.

This obliged him to go to London, and thinking, as long as he was away from home, it was better to get the business over and done with before he returned, he wrote to Clare not to expect him for several days.

Charteris had been surprised at the calmness with which Gilbert Forrester had heard the will read; he had expected some display of disappointment or anger. But there was none. Had he been able to look within the man's breast, and see the devils of rage and revenge which were storming there, he would have hurried back to Clare's side and never left her.

But the day after the funeral he went up to London, and the next day Sir Gilbert followed him.

And Clare eagerly watched for letters, and anxiously looked forward to her husband's return; but, knowing that it would distress him to find she had interrupted the routine of her life, she took her walks and drives as usual, and spent many hours floating on the bosom of the calm river in her little boat. She was an expert sailor, and managed her little craft fearlessly. It was a small boat which Guy had made for her, and had taught her himself to manage. Sometimes she would take the nurse, but more frequently she and little Guy would go alone together.

Soon after Charteris had gone up to London, a strange, dark-looking man was seen hanging about the park, and once or twice Clare had noticed him in her drives toward Brandon Towers. Busy with her own thoughts, however, and fearing no evil, she hardly bestowed a moment's care

upon the stranger; but the nurse was more nervous, and particularly after they came upon him quite suddenly in the park and met the glare of his savage black eyes, she begged her mistress so piteously not to go out of sight of the house alone, that Clare laughingly absolved her from any more attendance upon Master Guy in their walks. Several evenings after the nurse had been allowed to discontinue her attendance, Clare ordered out the boat at her usual time and proposed to Guy to sail with her.

Gayly the little craft answered to the wind and rudder, and in a few moments was beyond a wooded point, around which the river turned, completely shielded from and out of hearing of any one at the boat-house.

It was a lovely evening. The sun, near his setting, was hanging over the sea, and the crimson radiance of his lessening beams was reflected in the river, giving its waters a rosy hue. The trees were beginning to change their summer greenery for autumn's variegated mantle, and there was a stillness and quietness in the air, undisturbed save by the rippling of the water round the bow of the boat.

Giving herself up to the dreamy influence of the hour, with pleasant thoughts and the joyous anticipation of seeing her husband soon, Clare leaned back in her cushioned seat and indulged her fancies. Guy, a fine, noble, four-year-old boy, sat at her feet talking in his baby prattle.

As she entered the boat she had not noticed two fierce black eyes that gleamed out from among the bushes across the river, watching her every movement; nor did she see the lithe, supple form which sprang away from the river-side and swiftly sought the old building of Brandon Towers.

So the boat glided down the river, there being just enough air to keep the sail out and the boat in motion;

and Guy prattled and laughed, and sometimes dabbled with his hands in the water as he leaned over the gunwale. But soon there is water enough in the boat. At first Clare did not notice it, but at a delighted exclamation from Guy, she looked down to find the boat-carpet soaking wet, and the child playing in water which was rapidly rising.

Her first impulse was to snatch up Guy; her next to find the leak. But her cousin Gilbert's Hindu valet had taken good care that that should not be discovered. The water seemed to come in at all sides; and so it did, by small leaks cut just above the water-mark when the boat was empty. Then she essayed to turn the little craft towards the shore, but she trembled so, and the child in her lap retarded her movements, and the boat was getting so heavy with water, that it did not readily obey its helm; and finally, she discovered the sheet by which the sail was handled to be almost severed in one place, so that at the least strain put upon it it would part. Thus she was perfectly helpless, out in the middle of the river, the boat sinking rapidly, and no assistance, as she thought, near. She screamed as loudly as she could, but no answer was returned from the boat-house. Then she gathered the child up in her arms, and calmly awaited her fate. The water rose till it almost touched her feet.

Just then another boat with two men in it put out from the opposite shore and rowed quickly towards her. She saw them and felt that help was near, although she did not recognize by whom afforded; and before they drew close enough for her to recognize them she had fainted.

They did not try to recover her. George Robson (for it was he and Forrester) took the little Guy in his arms after he had assisted his companion to lift Clare into their boat, and the child was not afraid of him. A thrill of

pleasure shot through his heart as he felt the little arms around his neck and saw the child's clear eyes raised unhesitatingly to his.

"She will give less trouble this way than if she returns to herself, and I will make assurance doubly sure," said Forrester. And, resting on his oars, he drew a vial from his pocket, and, pouring some of its contents on his handkerchief, laid it lightly on her face. "There, my lady, you will not open your eyes until you are in a more retired spot."

"Mamma seep?" said little Guy, looking down at his mother with rather an alarmed gaze.

"Yes; she'll wake up presently," said Robson, hastily. "And now, can't you tell me your name?"

"Guy," answered the boy; "mamma's Guy," he added, "and Uncle Bobers's Guy."

"Who is Uncle Bobers?" asked Robson, amused by his prattle.

"He lives away off, and gives Guy candy," was the reply.

"Put that child down, Robson, and lend a hand at the oars, or we'll not get to the Towers to-night," growled Forrester.

Robson put the boy down alongside of his mother, on whom he laid his hand, while he gazed wonderingly into her insensible face.

They rowed to the old dilapidated landing at the foot of the hill upon which the Towers stood, and Forrester gave a peculiar whistle.

The Hindu came down the path, and, at a sign from his master, took the inanimate form of Clare Charteris in his arms and carried her towards the house. The others followed, Robson still holding Guy. Brandon Towers frowned down upon them from the hill-top; the gate was

open, and they entered the inclosure immediately round the building without meeting any one.

Although the sun had not quite set, it was so dark from the thick woods around that a light was already gleaming from some windows on the lower floor, and thither the man bore his still insensible burden.

They entered a room where a lamp was burning and a woman sat sewing. As they entered, she rose silently and opened a door into another room furnished as a bedroom.

Mrs. Charteris was laid upon the bed, and the woman with her sewing took her seat at the table, where another light burned. Clare still remained insensible.

"Here, Sarah, hadn't you better get the child out of the way?" asked Forrester, from the outer room.

The woman rose and returned to it. Her face wore a hard, stony look, and the child instinctively shrank back as she approached Robson, in whose arms he still was.

"Give him to me," was all she said.

But Guy clung around the neck of his first friend, and screamed when she tried to force him away.

"Never mind," said Robson; "I'll keep him and take care of him to-night."

He walked the floor with the boy, and then sat down and held him on his knee and kept his attention enchained for awhile by most wonderful stories.

At length Guy grew sleepy, and began to fret and cry for his mother. Forrester had taken care that Clare did not recover her senses; his wish was to keep her in this state till morning.

To quiet the boy, Robson took him into the room where his mother lay, and as soon as he saw her he stretched out his arms and called, "Mamma, mamma!" But receiving no answer, as Robson held him down close to her he put

his little hand on her eyes and said, "Mamma seep, Guy seepy, too."

Then Robson laid him on the bed beside her, and, prattling in his baby way, he lay there a little while awake, but gradually his eyes grew heavy and dewy with sleep, and in a few moments he was wrapped in the sweet balmy slumber of babyhood.

They sat up all night; the two men in one room, the woman with her pretense of sewing in the other. Long after the morning broke, there was a movement from the figure on the bed.

The woman got up and stood by the bedside.

"Watkins, did your master come home?" asked Clare, and then she started and looked wildly around her.

"Where am I? Where is Guy?" she asked, trying to raise herself to a sitting position; but her head was heavy and giddy, and she sank back upon the pillow helplessly, and closed her eyes.

When she opened them again she was alone.

She made a great effort and drew herself off of the bed, but she was obliged to support herself by it.

As she stood there in utter bewilderment, the door opened and Guy ran in.

"My darling! My Guy! Thank God, you are safe!"

She sank upon the floor and clasped him to her breast. Awhile they were alone. She had crawled to a chair, and drawn the boy into her lap. Again the door opened, and a voice said,—

"Good-morning, Cousin Clare!"

"Gilbert Forrester!" she exclaimed, rising, and instinctively clasping Guy closer to her.

"You know me, then! I feared, as it has been so many years since you saw me last, I was no longer held in remembrance. Let me welcome you to Brandon Towers."

"Brandon!—am I at Brandon Towers?"

"Ay, you are." But the peculiar tone of voice did not strike her.

"How did I come here? Ah, yes! I remember the boat was sinking, and then—I suppose I fainted."

"Exactly. I, and a friend of mine who was visiting me here, saw your danger, and reached you just in time to save you, if not from a watery grave, at least from a great alarm and danger."

"For that let me thank you." She held out her hand, with a smile of winning sweetness breaking over her face and lighting it up into beauty once more.

He could not meet that smile, cool as he was, and barely touched the extended hand.

"But why did you not take me home?—why bring me here?"

"I had my reasons, cousin mine."

"But we must go now, Gilbert. Guy was to have returned from London last night. If he did and does not find me he will be terribly alarmed. Poor fellow!" she continued, anxiously starting up, "what hours of anguish and anxiety he must have passed, if he came, as he expected, last night! But, of course, you sent him word of our safety?" she asked, suddenly.

"I did not."

"You did not! Gilbert, what do you mean? Could you not have sent a note—only two lines—two words?"

"I could, had I chosen; but I did not."

"Why—why?" she asked, wildly. "I—I don't understand it."

"Perhaps not; but I do."

"You must send us home, now, Gilbert, right away. I am thankful to you that you saved our lives, but I cannot let Guy suffer any more hours of anxiety."

"I think it is likely he will suffer many more before he sees you, Clare."

"What do you mean, Gilbert Forrester? for God's sake speak plainly!"

"I will, since you wish it. Do you remember the interview we had just before I went to India? Doubtless you do, and you remember, then, my telling you that the day of my revenge would come. You refused my love to marry the man whom of all others I hated. For that I swore revenge. And not content with robbing me of yourself, you robbed me of my uncle's fortune by your affectations of affection and goodness, supported by the inimitable Charteris, of Charteris. For that, when I heard of it, I swore a double revenge. I sent my Hindu servant and my housekeeper, so-called, down here several days ago; the one to watch your movements, the other to prepare for your residence here——"

"Gilbert, Gilbert, are you human?" she interrupted him with a cry, and sank back into the chair from which she had risen.

"The one," he continued, not noticing her words, "discovered what a fearless and expert boat-woman you were, and also, that by diving under the boat-house door he could effect an entrance to the charming little craft you were so fond of. Also he noted the hours when you were most likely to take your favorite exercise, and was on the alert to let me know when you started from the Charteris landing; consequently, when I arrived I found everything arranged to my hand."

She started up and clasped Guy to her.

"What do you wish me to do; what do you want?" Her eyes had a wild, terrified look in them.

"To settle our little account, Clare; and until that is arranged to *my* satisfaction, *you* do not leave this house."

She looked at him and read his full meaning in his face. There was no need for further words.

"Not leave—this—house! do you mean that?"

Her voice rose almost to a scream, her eyes were upon his face, and they dilated and grew fixed as she looked.

Then she passed her hands aimlessly over her boy's curls, a shudder shook her whole frame. She gave a hysterical laugh, and fell at his feet in violent convulsions.

CHAPTER V.

How shall we describe the anguish of that night at Charteris? After Clare had been gone a couple of hours, and there was no sign of her returning, the boatman came up to the house and told the housekeeper he felt uneasy. A number of the servants hurried down to and along the river bank, looking and crying and calling. Shott, the dog, seemed to know something was wrong, and to share their anxiety; he would plunge into the river and swim out a distance, then come back and howl and cry.

While they stood there, not knowing what to do, the early darkness began to fall. The boatman, with Benson, the butler, and two other of the men-servants, took lanterns, and drew out one of the other boats to go and search the river.

As they pushed off they heard the whistle of the train upon which Mr. Charteris was expected. That signal was given when the locomotive was at the turn above the stopping-place. Five seconds more and it would be at the station.

One of the grooms had gone to meet the master with the dog-cart, before the alarm had been given about Mrs. Charteris; consequently, her husband would reach home before he could know anything.

The men rowed on, holding a lantern each side of the boat, and moving slowly after they passed the point round which she was seen to sail, from one side of the river to the other.

The train arrived at the station. Mr. Charteris, with a "Well, Harris," sprang into the dog-cart; his valise was thrown in after him, and he took the reins, putting the horse to its utmost speed.

Through the gates, over the graveled carriage-drive, through the park, under those old oaks and elms, he drove up to the mansion door.

There was a light in the hall, but no one waiting to meet him. He had expected Clare's sweet face to be the first thing his eye would rest upon, and he was disappointed.

Throwing the reins to the groom, he sprang out and into the house; no one anywhere about. He looked into the library and the other rooms on that floor, then passed down a narrower hall, that crossed the other one at right angles, and sought his wife's own sitting-room,—the room in which they had been last together.

It, too, was empty; a light burned upon the table, but the room was empty. No, there was a sound,—a sound between a cry of joy and a bark; he looked over towards the window, and there lay Shott. The dog did not raise his head, which rested on the floor between his paws, but swayed the heavy brush of his tail over the carpet in a semicircle.

His master walked over to him, and he gave another cry. Mr. Charteris stopped and laid his hand on his

head; it was wet. Then he saw there was something in the dog's mouth. He took hold of it, and found it was one of his wife's gardening-gloves. As soon as his master took the glove in his hand, Shott sprang out of the window. The carpet where he had been lying was wet, as well as where he had swept it with his heavy tail. Struck by this with an anxiety he had not felt before, Mr. Charteris followed him.

It was quite dark, but he understood at once why there was no one to meet him at the house. All the servants were collected at and about the boat-house; some had lanterns, others torches hastily formed by binding three or four wax tapers together, and the flames of which threw a lurid light over the trees and water and faces of the men and women.

In an instant Guy was among them. Silently they fell back, and as silently he passed right to the edge of the water. No one dared to speak. He went down to the boat-house and looked in; then he turned and gazed questioningly at one of the grooms who was standing next to him, and the flare of whose waxen torch revealed the agony of his face.

In deep pity, the man said, "They be gone to see what have happened, sir."

"Where?" He asked the question rather by the motion of his dry, white lips than by the uttered word.

The man pointed down the river. His master sprang into the boat-house, and began to unfasten the only boat left there. Two or three of the men followed him, and in a few moments they were on the track of Tom and Benson. The crowd of servants stood and waited, while Shott sprang into the water and swam after his master.

The first boat was rowed slowly across the river and back, back and forth, as they went on, keeping a keen

lookout. Presently they saw beyond the rays of their lantern, in the dim distance, something white, and they rowed towards it.

And now their worst fears are confirmed, for it is the sail of the boat which had attracted them; but the precious freight is gone!—only Guy's felt hat, the feather dripping in a long string, hung over one of the rowlocks. The little craft, full of water, lay partly on its side, caught in a bed of sea-weeds and grass, the loose sail hanging mournfully to its mast. That was all!

At this sight the men in the boat stopped rowing, and gazed for a moment in each other's faces; then Tom, the boatman, broke the silence:

"Heaven help the master!—they be gone down!"

"And there he is!" exclaimed Benson, as the boat in which Mr. Charteris had followed them rounded the point. In another moment he was alongside.

Without speaking he reached out and caught the rope, and tried to draw the sunken craft towards him. The men understood his wish intuitively, and turned their boats side by side, and those who were not rowing seized the rope, and so moved the disabled boat and drew it towards the shore. As soon as they got it into shallow water two of them sprang in and drew it up upon the grass.

Then Guy Charteris sank down in his agony upon the turf, and moaned aloud. His men stood round and looked at him silently; but eyes that never knew a tear before were dim, and poor Tom, utterly overcome, threw himself at the foot of a tree and sobbed. Then they tried to raise their master and carry him to the house, but he resisted.

"No; bring me a glass of brandy, and get ropes and poles and lanterns, to search the river!"

"The tide is going out!" one of the men spoke, almost unconsciously.

"My God, have mercy!" Charteris' head sank in his hands, and his whole frame shook with agony.

All night they searched and dragged the river; and the stars paled out, and the rising sun's earliest rays sparkled on the waters; his last beams crimsoned all the western sky—and still they worked on.

Down the stream, past the Towers landing; but there was no boat there now,—not a sign of life or motion. Only two fiery eyes watched them from behind a clump of bushes, following them step by step as they went down.

Down the stream, inch by inch, they worked; but all in vain! Their utmost efforts were fruitless. Never would Guy Charteris hold his wife or baby in his arms again! Never again!—never again!

CHAPTER VI.

THE old halls of Brandon Towers had been silent for many years to the echo of baby laughter or baby cries.

Not since Gilbert Forrester had been a child—first, a tender babe, guarded by a devoted mother's love; then, a happy, innocent boy—had the old walls echoed to the expression of childish joy or sorrow.

That night a baby's first feeble moan was heard within the grim walls. It was a very feeble moan, and soon stilled forever. No father's blessing rested on its brow; no mother's hand caressed it.

So they laid the little form in a rude box, and piled the earth over it, at the foot of the elm-tree near

the gate, while the mother lay unconscious of all around her—and the father!——

Guy Charteris had gone up from the river, when the search was proved fruitless, into his wife's room, the room in which he had found the dog; and had not left it. Shott stayed with him nearly all the time, sometimes pacing up and down the room with his master; sometimes lying down and watching him; moaning now and then, as though he would fain let him know how deep his sympathy was. Anon, he would thrust his head under his master's hand and gaze up at him with his almost human eyes.

The news spread through the country that the sweet lady of Charteris Manor and its heir had been drowned, and expressions of sympathy from neighboring families poured in by letter as well as in personal calls. For Clare had been very much loved by all who knew her, and the intelligence shocked and saddened every one. But Guy would see no one—read nothing. Only the rector, Mr. Forsyth, his old friend and former tutor, found his way, by reason of his sacred office, to the suffering man's side, and remained there.

The news spread to London, and in due time Sir Gilbert Forrester arrived. At first, Guy thought he would not see him; he remembered Clare's antipathy, and begged Mr. Forsyth to be the bearer of his excuses. But Mr. Forsyth reminded him that Forrester was his wife's sole relation, and it was his due to be admitted.

The reverend gentleman went himself to meet the baronet, and accompanied him to the door of the room, but did not enter. He did not admire Gilbert Forrester, and never had, and now less than ever; for there was a triumphant air about the man which he could not conceal under a show of sadness, strive as he would, for which

Mr. Forsyth was unable to find a reason. As his visitor entered the room, Guy stood up and held out his hand. But before the other could reach him, a rush of memories came over him, and, throwing himself upon the sofa, he buried his face in his hands, while his whole frame shook with agony. These were the first tears he had shed.

Forrester hardly knew what to say; the grief was so fearful that common words of condolence would have seemed a mockery, and he could not go to him and say, "Your wife lives; I have her in my custody!" He had come prepared to cast his last die; to tell Charteris that Clare was not dead, and frame some plausible reason for her detention at Brandon, *after* he had proposed the price of his discovery, which was to be the relinquishment of his uncle's property. He knew he was liable to the law for kidnapping his cousin, and that he could not really blind Charteris to the truth; but he knew, too, the great pride which would prevent him from making any avoidable *exposé*, and counted upon his joy at finding his lost ones to make good his own terms. But he could do nothing now, he felt, as he stood and looked down at the prostrate figure, and he knew time once lost here could not be regained. He would have to talk calmly to a calm man, and he found Guy Charteris was in no condition to listen.

Mr. Forsyth, hearing the stricken man's moans, hurried to his side, and made a gesture to Forrester to leave the room. Like one in a dream, the latter turned and obeyed, but when he reached the door he looked back and made a motion as if to speak. But the rector repeated his gesture more imperatively, and with a muttered oath he closed the door behind him, and, taking his way to the river, requested to be ferried over, saying he and a friend were staying at Brandon for a few days.

Once again on *terra firma*, and his face turned away from Charteris, he suffered the studied expression of sorrow he had kept up to give way to one of perplexity. What was he to do?

Give up his cherished plans, and carry Clare back some night, and leave her and Guy there, on the platform of the boat-house, returned as mysteriously as she disappeared?

That was impossible; besides, he still clung to the coveted wealth, and he could not forego his revenge: that was sweeter even than the gold.

But he felt that something must be done, and that quickly, if he was to be successful. Clare's illness was a great drawback, also; he had prepared for it, but did not dream of its taking this form. A month's, or even a week's delay would ruin everything; and here was Clare unconscious still, and Robson unable to say when a change would come. And Charteris, too, to break down like a sniveling woman, just when he wanted him to be cool and collected! He must make another attempt to see him the next day.

Little Guy, too, he found one too many, and dark thoughts crossed his mind of putting the child out of the way at once and forever, in case of failure. Murder had not been included in his plans, at first. Once, in the far Indian country, years ago, he had not hesitated when a human life had stood between him and his object. Then, however, Robson was so completely broken-spirited, and felt himself so entirely in his, Forrester's power, that he had had no difficulty (aided by the tardy and irregular "justice" of the country, particularly where only a native was concerned) in putting off all risk on him. He, himself, escaped without suspicion; his tool, or victim, if not without suspicion, without conviction.

But here in England he had not the same chance, and even now, when the disappearance of Clare and Guy was so easily and readily accounted for by the river, and the country had settled down to an opinion that they were drowned, even now he hesitated, for there was still risk of discovery, and he was not quite so sure of Robson. Altogether, his meditations were not *couleur de rose*, as he threaded his way over the rankly-grown grass, and the few early-fallen leaves under the oaks and elms, up the hill to the Towers.

Until Forrester's visit, Guy Charteris had done nothing but sit in his wife's room, or pace its length. I don't believe he thought about anything or made any plans; he was stunned, and let the days slip by without knowing how they passed.

Afterwards, he went over the mansion; he ordered that nothing belonging to his wife should be touched, nor any arrangements she had made should be altered. Her morning-room was just as she had left it. The fellow to the glove Shott found was lying on the table with her garden-hat, just as she had taken them off. Her husband had laid his head upon them, and had moaned out his grief over them; but he had not raised them from where they lay. A book of poems lay open on the sofa, with a piece of lace thrown across to mark the page. Her work, some infinitesimal garment trimmed with daintiest lace and embroidery, lay half in, half out of her basket, with the threaded needle in it, just as she had put it down, perhaps to answer some childish appeal of Guy's, for a toy of the boy's was lying near on the floor, and her thimble had rolled off to one corner of the sofa, half hidden in the crevice between the seat and back.

Some flowers were in the vases in the drawing-room and dining-room, just as she had fixed them. And as she

had done so, what anticipations of meeting the husband, in whose honor they had been arranged, had made her sweet eyes bright! The water dried in the vases, and the flowers faded and fell away untouched by other hands. Her dressing-room and bed-room each bore marks of her recent presence, and were undisturbed. Then, leaving the house in charge of Benson and the housekeeper, he journeyed with no particular intention up to London, and two days afterwards found himself on board a vessel bound for New York, with the faithful Shott as his only *compagnon de voyage*.

When Forrester, two days after his first visit to Charteris, repeated it, he was told that the master had left in the train which had started only an hour ago. He followed him, but was unable to find him at his club or whereabouts he had secured lodgings. Enraged at this failure, he had recourse to the comfort of a glass of brandy, and the taste of the liquor once upon his tongue he must have more; and so, before he again knew what he was about, Guy Charteris had left England, and all his hopes and plans were dashed to earth.

CHAPTER VII.

THE passing months brought surcease of all sorrow to Clare Charteris. Not in the great mercy of her death,—that would have been indeed a blessing, but would have been too great a relief to the miserable man who had wrought her great undoing,—but in a living death which was next best.

Her mind never recovered the shock and suffering of

that fearful night, and when she was once more comparatively well, it was found she was a mental wreck. Neither did she recover physically in full; paralysis had laid its stern touch upon her limbs, and she was as helpless as a baby. She was never violent, and gave little trouble; and one spark of the former light remained in her love for Guy. She was perfectly happy when her boy was with her, and uneasy in his absence. Fortunately, Guy was not afraid of her. He would look up at her sometimes with a strange wonder in his eyes,—a look that made George Robson turn away. But the child called her "Mamma," and the name would evoke a sweet, loving smile on the wan face, and an expression as if it brought back to the poor weak brain some dim recollection which the shattered intellect could not shape into proper form.

Over and over again did Forrester ask Robson if there would ever be any change. But he could only shake his head. For once Fate, or whatever ruled the world in Forrester's ideas of such things, had been too much for him. He had been so used to success in all his villainies, that he could not comprehend the failure now. He had not been often to Brandon Towers as the days went on, but soon after Guy Charteris sailed for New York he came. The household still consisted only of the woman Sarah Hawkesly and the Hindu valet. The villagers at Brandon and Charteris were still suspicious of the woods around the Towers, and even when once in a long time any of them had business there, the high wall and heavy wooden gate, equally high, prevented any surprise, and no one was admitted within the enclosure. The Hindu could speak very little English, only enough to assist him in his catering errands to the village, and the woman never left the house. What hold Forrester had on this woman Robson never knew, although he guessed it pretty

correctly; she was perfectly silent on her own affairs, and seldom spoke on other subjects. At first he was afraid to leave Clare alone with her, there was such a fierce hate in her eyes when she looked at her; but when Clare sank into this miserable state, only pity was shown in the woman's face, and she could not do too much or show enough tenderness to her and Guy. And she evinced, in a quiet way, a strong detestation of Forrester. At which he only laughed. Forrester had written to Robson the news of Guy's departure from England; and two days after the letter was received he descended upon the little household like a thunder-clap.

"He's lost,—the vessel a wreck, and all hands lost but one sailor!"

"Who?" asked George.

"Damn you, don't play the fool! who but *he—he—*" pointing to little Guy, who had paused in his playing, and looked up in astonishment. "Do you comprehend now? Gone, and all my plans frustrated!"

"Well, what are you going to do?" asked Robson, quietly.

"Do!" and before Robson could interfere, he turned upon Guy and struck him to the floor, and would have kicked the life out of him, had not Robson sprung to the rescue. Then he turned upon his poor, helpless victim, and, catching her by the arm, shook her with the fierceness and strength of a tiger. Clare screamed with fright, and it was several hours before Sarah could quiet her.

"Is this story true? I can't believe you!" said Robson, after Clare had been removed out of the room.

"Oh, that is a matter of indifference to me! The account of the shipwreck was in the papers where all could see it. Mr. Upham has no doubt of the truth of it; no word has come from him to prove him to be living."

The next day, little Guy having fallen asleep on the couch beside Robson, he was obliged to leave him for a moment, and when he returned he discovered Forrester standing at the child's bedside with a bottle, and, as Robson perceived instantly by the odor in the room, a handkerchief soaked with chloroform, in his hands.

It required but a moment for him to dash the bottle to the floor, and snatch the handkerchief away.

"George Robson, are you sane?" exclaimed Forrester, turning upon him. "How dare you interfere with me?"

"I dare to prevent murder, whether you are the murderer or not, Gilbert Forrester."

"A new rôle for you to play!" sneered the other.

"Come, none of that!" returned Robson, throwing his head back and looking Forrester full in the face. "The time has come when this must cease; come out of this, lest we wake the poor child,—for I have a few words for your private ear, and I think now the sooner they are spoken the better."

He opened the door and held it for his companion, who was so astonished by the suddenness of this change in Robson as to obey him silently and almost unconsciously.

CHAPTER VIII.

ONCE more in the other room, Robson seated himself and motioned Forrester to a chair.

"Begin," sneered the latter; "I am all attention."

"It is well you are. I only add one word more—remember."

"Really, Robson, that was well done! Pity when you

were turned out of the army you did not go on the stage! That tone and gesture were worthy of Kean himself."

Robson made no answer, but regarded his companion calmly and steadily.

"Gilbert Forrester," he said at last, "you are a greater devil than I thought you, but I know you now! Nothing that I could be told of you after this could surprise me, for I believe there is no wickedness great enough to check you."

"I feel honored by your high opinion, so frankly expressed!"

"But," continued Robson, "you are mistaken in one thing,—you have no longer a tool in me. It was not wise in you to force me into this seclusion, with such a care upon my hands. The sight of Clare Charteris' sufferings, the innocent prattle and love of her boy, were more eloquent, more powerful for change in me, than all the sermons in the world. The change is made, and I am no longer the George Robson you met in the London coffee-house. In spite of my duties here, I have found sufficient time to make a full and free confession of your sins and my own, and, having sworn to the truth of the statements made in the paper, before a notary, have left it, sealed, in the hands of a friend of mine in Barnstaple, with proper directions when and where to read and make known the contents. I have written an exact and full account of the life of Sir Gilbert Forrester, and doubtless the English public will enjoy the reading."

Forrester sprang upon him with a fearful oath. But Robson drew a pistol from his breast, and advised him to be seated.

"I have not finished, by any means; when I have I will be ready to listen to whatever arguments you may wish to use, and to answer them in kind. I am going to

take your victims away, where you will never be able to injure them."

"You are! Upon my soul, you have come out in a new character this evening, with a vengeance!"

"It is time," replied Robson.

"You forget the father is dead,—you can look for no reward for your virtue from him; and Clare and Guy being out of the way, who is to prevent me from walking into the rest of my uncle's property?" He paused a moment, and watched Robson's face. "It will be more to your interest to stick to me, man,—I am your best friend."

"Friend? Fiend!" exclaimed Robson. "But I had forgotten—yes, I see now—I understand!"

"You do? Well, I am glad. Now, do you propose to take Guy away?"

"I do; more than ever. The tables are turned, Gilbert Forrester; beware how you forget that fact! If I give no orders to the contrary, in seven days' time the paper I spoke of will be public. It depends upon you whether it shall be or not."

"Damn you! what do you want?"

"Oh, that is better; I'll tell you what I want in a few words. I mean to take Clare and Guy away, and to take care of them. But you must set aside sufficient maintenance for them,—not merely enough for food and clothing, but to educate and keep Guy as a gentleman's son. And this arrangement must be made permanently,—not to be set aside by any after-events, such as your marriage, or—do you understand me?"

Forrester had been sitting with folded arms and a sneering smile on his lips. He did not change his position; only nodded his head.

"On that condition and no other I will keep my own

counsel and withdraw that dangerous document from my friend's hands. But stop!" seeing the other made a movement to rise, "you don't escape me so easily. The last condition is a rather hard one, but one I shall exact more than all the others. Before I leave England I will witness a will made by you, leaving to Guy all the property you will receive on account of Guy Charteris' death, and to Clare, if she survives you, a comfortable maintenance."

"Upon my soul, a pretty arrangement!"

"One you will find it expedient to come into."

"I think not."

"Do you forget the little story I have written?"

"No; but I don't believe you. I don't think you are quite a fool, and you know your own life would be the penalty, as well as mine!"

"I know that. Do you suppose life is so great a boon to me that I should hesitate to lose it, so *you* did not escape? Heavens, man! every one is not the heartless, cruel fiend, lost to all human feeling, you are!"

"I certainly did not expect to find such exquisite sensibility in *you* at this late day!"

"Then you are agreeably surprised, I hope. Had you left me to the life I had drawn out for myself, I might, in spite of the past, have found existence as sweet as the generality of men do; but my evil fortune—my destiny, I suppose I must call it—discovered me when you stumbled over me in the coffee-house, and I was weak enough to yield to it. I became once more your tool,—once more a slave to remorse and sorrow,—till now, except for these helpless ones, I care not to live; for, as I said before, you made a wrong move when you left this task to me. The scenes I have witnessed here, the long, solitary hours which I have spent, with no companion but that innocent child and foully-wrecked woman,—thinking—

thinking,—have wrought a change at which I am surprised myself."

Forrester did not answer, and the two sat for some moments silent. Then Robson said,—

"Well, do you agree? Remember, *my* life is nothing to me, except for their sake; and if that paper is made public, they will find friends enough."

"Yes; damn you! I can do nothing else!"

Two weeks after this, all was arranged. A yacht belonging to Forrester dropped down from Liverpool to the mouth of the river, and one night the mother and child were conveyed on board, the sails spread for the Mediterranean; and Brandon Towers was left once more to the undisturbed possession of bats and owls. The weeds grew up in the courtyard, and the grass was greener and the wild flowers bloomed more freely at the roots of the elm-tree near the gate.

BOOK SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

SAD, very sad were Guy Charteris' musings as the good ship Alectro sped on her way down the channel, and he saw the shores of England fading from his sight. The vessel had quite a large number of passengers, but, except to give a courteous "good-morning" or "good-night," he spoke to no one. Among the passengers were a lady and gentleman,—father and daughter,—who also seemed to avoid the rest, and be satisfied with their own society. But this seclusion was sought by Mr. Thornton, because of his rapidly-failing health; and by Margaret, because the world was looking very sombre to her just then. She was very devoted to her father, and tended him most carefully during his walks on deck, or when she could be of use to him in the cabin. But when she had a few moments to herself, she would steal up on deck and sit in some concealed nook, gazing over the waters with a hopeless, longing look in her eyes that could not be put into words. Guy Charteris often noticed her, although he never sought to break the barrier of silence between them. It seemed as if the secret sorrow from which both were suffering was an unconscious attraction.

And so the good ship sped on her way, and was soon out upon the broad Atlantic. But here her fate met her.

One of those fierce winds, that are so much dreaded, came upon them, and, though every sail was furled, and all that human knowledge could do was done to prevent the dire catastrophe, the vessel scudded with bare poles before the wind into the dangerous waters of the Bay of Biscay, and was wrecked almost in sight of the shores of France. The news of the shipwreck was carried to England by a sailor who was picked up by a vessel returning to Liverpool, after drifting at the mercy of wind and waves for thirty-six hours, upon a broken mast to which he had lashed himself. This man believed himself the only one saved, for he had seen the ship's boats capsized, with their human freight, and had left two of the male passengers and one female and a dog on the fragment of the wreck from which he had sprung into the water to try and float to land.

Gilbert Forrester was in Scotland when he heard the news. He wrote immediately to some acquaintance in London and to Mr. Upham, Guy's lawyer, and received confirmation of the intelligence. Instead of proceeding at once to London, he paid that visit to Devonshire which we have recorded in the last chapter. There he was forced into George Robson's plans, and they were pressed upon him so closely that he was glad, only too glad, to satisfy him, and see him out of England before he took the time to pay Mr. Upham a visit, and claim his cousin Clare's property as sole surviving relative. This delay was unfortunate.

The day upon which the "Sea-gull" yacht, with Clare and Guy and their self-appointed guardian, sailed from St. George's Channel, Mr. Upham was seated in his office, looking over the paper which contained the account of the shipwreck, and recalling, with a sigh, the kindly pleasant face of Guy Charteris, meditating on the sad fate which had swept away that happy household in so short a

time, when the door opened and the object of his thoughts stood before him.

Yes; pale, and haggard, and weary-looking, still it was Guy Charteris himself who walked slowly into the room, and, holding out his hand, said,—

"Am I like one risen from the dead to you?"

"God bless my soul!" was all Mr. Upham could for a moment ejaculate.

"I dare say you are surprised," said Guy, smiling sadly and seating himself, seeing the lawyer was too bewildered to remember politeness. "The boon of eternal rest does not come when it is most longed for, and out of all the living souls, many full of dreams and plans for the future, and bright hopes of happiness to come, who were in the doomed ship, only I, for whom life has neither hope or happiness, and two others are saved."

"God bless my soul!" Mr. Upham had to take off his spectacles and wipe them several times before he could see his visitor clearly; and he relieved his feelings by repeating the above exclamation in several different tones, before he demanded to know the full particulars.

They were soon told. Providence had drifted him, with an old gentleman and his daughter and the dog, upon some rocks, where a fishing-boat found them, and carried them into Cherbourg, where he had left his companions in misfortune as soon as he ascertained that they would recover from the effects of the exposure.

Then Mr. Upham showed him Forrester's letter, in which he announced his intention of calling upon the lawyer as soon as he returned to London, and spoke of himself as Clare Charteris' heir.

Guy had always had a kindly feeling towards Forrester, black sheep as he was, and could not understand the aversion Clare had felt for him. But the letter he read

revealed something of the man's true character, and dashing it down, with a gesture of disgust, he drew a sheet of paper towards him and wrote for several minutes.

"There," said he, pushing it towards Upham, "when Sir Gilbert Forrester calls, show him that; it will damp his ardor slightly."

It was an order or directions to Mr. Upham to retain and manage all property of which Guy Charteris was possessed, either in his own right or his wife's, during his absence from England; and in case of the reported death of Guy Charteris, no change or arrangement of his affairs was to be made until ten years had passed. Dated the day he first left England.

"But the date,—why is this, when I can simply tell him you are living? Besides, he will see you himself," said the lawyer.

"That I do not wish you to do," replied Guy. "I have dated it so far back, as being written previous to my first departure. There is no proof of my death,—the sailor cannot say he saw any dead body,—consequently my last arrangements hold good still. I leave England to-morrow, and no one shall know of my existence but you, and you must swear to keep my secret."

After a long talk with Mr. Upham, who vainly attempted to change his plans, Guy left him, and, true to his word, the next night found him in Paris.

When Gilbert Forrester called the next day, he was met by Mr. Upham with calm politeness, and, as soon as he broached the subject that had brought him, the lawyer handed him the document Guy had prepared. Foiled and disappointed, Forrester put no restraint upon his feelings, and stormed and raved in the lawyer's office almost as wildly as he had done in the sitting-room at Brandon. His behavior and language were such that Mr. Upham

threatened the interference of the police, and, when his unwelcome visitor left him, he ordered his servant never to admit him again.

Sad and hopeless were Guy Charteris' thoughts, as he once more turned his face away from English shores. He had promised Mr. and Miss Thornton, his companions in misfortune, to meet them at Paris, and sail with them from Havre. During the storm he had been drawn to them by the old gentleman's helplessness, and his daughter's heroic efforts to lessen her father's alarm, and save him, even if she herself was lost.

There is nothing like such a danger and such scenes, passed through together, to awaken warm feelings of friendship, if not of love; and it was with the first sensation of satisfaction, not to say pleasure, that he had felt for a long time, that Guy met their pleased faces when he sought their address in Paris. Shott had shown his perfect appreciation of Miss Thornton by attaching himself to her, and refusing to leave her when his master returned to England.

The shock and exposure had been almost too much for Mr. Thornton, and he seemed very feeble. But he was only the more anxious on that account to reach home, for he was an American, and he anxiously waited for the day of the ship's sailing.

The Thorntons knew nothing of Charteris, except that he was an English gentleman; he had given no account of himself, and they knew not whether the deep mourning he wore was for wife or other relation. Miss Thornton quickly perceived that some great, crushing sorrow had fallen upon him, and she longed to comfort him, but shrank from seeking a confidence not freely given. She would watch his face when he fell into a melancholy reverie, as he often did. During the few days they remained in

Paris, Guy was very attentive and kind to the old man, but the daughter soon perceived that her company alone was painful to him, and consequently tried only to see him in the presence of her father.

At last they left Paris, and were once more on board ship, where, if anywhere, owing to the close association and long seclusion, people soon learn to know each other intimately. But Guy held aloof from every one except Mr. Thornton, and Margaret only saw him when he sat each day a portion of the time with the old gentleman.

After they had been out some days, Margaret Thornton's fears for her father were realized, and he began to sink rapidly. As he grew worse he depended more and more upon Guy, and did not want him to leave him. He took the opportunity while his daughter was exercising a little, or breathing the fresh air on deck, to tell Guy of his anxiety on her account, and of the arrangements he had made in her regard. She was his only child, and while he was not by any means wealthy, what he had to leave her would render her above any necessity for exertion, and be, in fact, a comfortable little fortune for a single person. His brother-in-law lived in New York, and he exacted a promise from Guy that he would not leave Margaret until he saw her safe in the shelter of her uncle's house.

The next day the end came. Guy stood with Margaret at the death-bed, and closed the old man's eyes with gentle reverence. He supported her during the solemn burial-service, and then consigned her to the care of some kind lady-passengers, who took her to themselves during the first violence of her grief. They were nearing New York when he saw her again. She was wrapped up warmly and pacing the deck with one of her lady friends when he joined her, and asked her to give him her atten-

tion for a little while. As soon as her companion left them, he began to tell her what arrangements her father had made for her future. The conversation naturally brought up memories of the lost, and her tears flowed freely. Guy knew well that all the wordy consolation in the world would make death nothing but death; so he attempted none. But he told her in that sad hour of his own bereavement, and so won her from her own sorrow to sympathize with his.

After seeing her safely to her uncle's house, he bade good-by to his sad traveling companion and left her, never dreaming he would see her face again.

The letters with which he had been provided on first leaving England were of course lost, but Mr. Upham had given him one to a friend living in Washington, and this he determined not to deliver for awhile. He knew two members of the English legation intimately, and dreaded meeting them.

Leaving him thus, a stranger in a strange land, having found the change and the new scenes in which he hoped to discover the charmed Lethe, turn we back to England.

CHAPTER II.

RAVING and storming as if ten thousand devils were let loose in his heart, Gilbert Forrester sought his rooms after leaving Mr. Upham's office. There he remained until his passion had spent itself, and then he took thought as to what next had best be done.

The week following saw him a guest at Lord Camper-

donne's castle, where was Miss Lee, the only daughter and heiress of the gallant old General Sir Henry Lee.

Forrester had turned over a new leaf; Sarah Hawkesly was sent out of the way to the estate inherited from his uncle; he shaved off his beard, leaving only a tawny moustache drooping over his thin, cruel lips. The day he appeared for the first time without his beard, he had been introduced to Miss Lee, and told of her expectations,—her dowry would be half a million,—and he had sought his own room for meditation upon his future plans. He was standing before his glass twisting his moustache with his long, slender, white fingers, when his eye rested upon an engraving of the garden scene in Faust, which hung on the opposite wall. He walked over to get a better look at it, then returned to his glass, and by a quick movement of his hand through his hair at his temples, drawing up his eyebrows at the outer corner, and giving his moustache also an upward twist with both hands, laughed with devilish pleasure at the reflection of himself. Gounod had not then written his opera, but if he had, and Hermans or Drayton had required a study for the Mephistopheles, they would have found all they wanted by glancing over his shoulder.

An hour later he was the *cavaliere servente* of Miss Lucy Lee.

No one possessed the *savoir faire* or *savoir vivre* to a greater degree than Sir Gilbert Forrester. To see him, dressed in faultless taste, with his light, tawny hair thrown carelessly back from his forehead, his military moustache drooping over his lip, which, when in motion, revealed the faultless teeth,—his blue eyes looking only innocent devotion and all kindly feeling,—who would have thought the scenes in the old tower at Brandon, or in Mr. Upham's office—to go no further back—could have been possible?

Miss Lee knew nothing about it. She only felt the velvet glove, knowing nothing of the iron hand beneath it; she saw what she supposed was the light of love in the blue eye, but not the sneering devil that was crouching there, and which had shown so plainly in the Mephistopheles picture; she heard the careful and gentle modulations of a naturally musical voice, and knew not the tones it could assume.

To her Gilbert Forrester was *un homme sans peur et sans reprôche*, and so in the merry Christmas time he wooed her, and in the early spring won her—half a million.

What time she felt the iron hand, or saw the sneering devil, or the changes in the musical voice grated on her horrified ears, I will not tell; it is not necessary to the story. Their wedded life lasted eight years, and in that time three children were born to them, two boys and a girl,—the latter only a few months old when the poor mother died. Her two boys had preceded her to the grave, and only this girl-baby was left to her father's tender mercies; and, strange to say, she found them very tender. By some wonderful influence his little daughter discovered the only corner of his cruel heart that was not callous. She crept in there, and grew into it until he could seldom bear to be parted from her. Henceforth he lived and schemed only for his darling Rose.

But we anticipate.

CHAPTER III.

MEANTIME, what of George Robson and little Guy?

The boy's fifth birthday occurred soon after they left England; he was so young Robson hoped all memory of the past would be lost, and he did all he could to make the child forget the last sad months, as far as possible, with such a terrible reminder as poor Clare was.

Robson was puzzled what to do with Clare,—she was so perfectly helpless, and clung so to Guy's presence. He felt, too, such a deep, abiding pity for the wreck of the once happy and lovely woman, that he had not the heart to do what common sense dictated,—put her into an asylum, where she would be tenderly and gently cared for. They cruised around the Mediterranean all through the winter months, spending sometimes a week, sometimes a month, in one of the Eastern ports, when Robson would take Guy ashore and show him all that was of interest or importance.

At length, in the early spring, they put in at Marseilles; and, in conversation with the physician who came on board to examine the condition of the yacht, and who became much interested in Clare's state on seeing her and being told of the cause of it, Robson heard of an eminent medical man in Paris, who had wrought most wonderful cures.

He immediately determined to proceed thither, and have the opinion of so successful a practitioner. He knew that Clare's return to reason would entail ruin, and

perhaps a disgraceful death upon himself, as well as upon Sir Gilbert, but he struggled firmly against the dread he felt of the consequences of discovery, and resolved to do all in his power to restore the poor lady in whose destruction he had been instrumental.

Discharging the crew of the vessel, the middle of May found the little party nicely fixed in quiet lodgings in a quiet part of Paris.

Immediately on his arrival, George Robson saw the physician to whom he had been recommended, and found in M. Gresset a most charming person. Gentle and kindly as a woman, at the same time a man of profound learning, he entered from the first, with deep interest, into the case, not, of course, pronouncing at once whether he could cure her. He bestowed close and unremitting attention upon his patient all through the spring, and in July sent her to the celebrated mineral waters of B——. Here they remained all summer, and as the nurse whom M. Gresset had recommended to him in Paris proved faithful and efficient, Robson had time to take walks with Guy, and interest him in the charming scenery around. M. Gresset paid them two or three visits, and although to Robson's less-practiced eye the change in Clare was imperceptible, yet the Frenchman seemed satisfied. On his last visit he essayed to raise her to her feet, and Robson was surprised to find she could stand for several minutes without support.

There was no change in Clare's mental condition, however, and that was what Robson hoped for and yet dreaded.

In the autumn they returned to Paris and remained two years longer; at the end of that time, thanks to M. Gresset, Clare was able to walk again. Her mind had strengthened also; but the past was a perfect blank. She

acted rationally in all things connected with the present, but could not remember the least thing that happened before that fearful September evening. Robson felt that this was a reprieve, and, thankful for what had already been done, did not allow the impossible to distress him beyond measure. The memory of his crime was always with him; how could it be otherwise with Clare and her boy his constant companions? But he felt now that he had done to the extent of his power in reparation, little as that was. As soon as Clare's cure was decided, they left Paris to spend the summer in straying among the Swiss mountains; as winter came on, at Guy's request, they returned to that city for another six months. The boy seemed never to tire of it. Robson would not send him to school, but devoted a couple of hours in the mornings to certain studies, and afterwards, in their walks, lost no opportunity of illustrating what he had found in his books. He had already become quite at his ease in the language, and spoke it well; indeed, he developed a wonderful lingual talent.

Then the next two years passed in pleasant saunterings through Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, until, finally, they decided to fix themselves in Rome. Here Guy was in ecstasies, there was so much to see, so many discoveries to be made. He was now in his tenth year, a fine, manly boy, tall for his age, with his father's curly brown hair, and his mother's deep-blue eyes.

Still, Robson did not send him to school; he directed the boy's education himself, and although he had pursued no regular system, only striving to "point a moral and adorn a tale" from everything around them, was rewarded by Guy's quick intelligence and love of learning; and he really was more advanced in some studies than most boys of his age. They spent a year in Rome, or, I should say,

two winters, leaving it for Switzerland during the hot months. In the second spring, on the morning of the 25th of May, 1849, Clare died; she was ill for only a few days, and died without any improvement in her mental state. Tenderly nursed by the sister of mercy whom Robson brought to her bedside, watched with anxious care by Robson and little Guy, her end was peaceful. And tenderly as he had cared for her, watching and battling with every symptom during her short illness, Clare's death was a great relief to Robson. He felt as if a mountain had been lifted from his shoulders.

Guy's grief was like that of all children, a violent and bitter one, but soon diverted; he did not forget his mother, however, but was amused and distracted, and soon learned to think of her with a quiet melancholy that was undemonstrative.

One of the results of Guy's residence in Rome had been to effect a change in his name; the short, sharp sound of the English Guy did not come readily to Italian lips, and so he gradually lost it, being called altogether by a softer one, *Giulio*. Thus another question that had often puzzled Robson,—for he had sometimes thought of returning to England, and feared the name would arouse suspicion,—without his own intervention, was settled for him. Wherever it had been necessary to register Guy's name, he had written it as that of his nephew, "Guy Conway;" he was only too glad to adopt the new substitute. The summer after Clare's death, Robson proposed a new programme. Instead of visiting Switzerland, which in all the usual tourists' routes they knew by heart, he suggested that they should make a leisurely saunter over to Trieste, and down the eastern coast of the Adriatic, traveling only when and how the humor seized them. The perfect freedom and Bohemianism of this idea pleased

Guy exceedingly, and in the first part of July they began to put their plan in operation.

They were very much interested in the quaint, old, dirty town of Trieste, and thence wandered pleasantly down, sometimes close along the Adriatic, sometimes making excursions up among the Julian Alps. In this way they reached Spalatra. Here they stayed a few days, making little picnic excursions into the neighborhood. In one of these they came across a cottage most delightfully nestled at the foot of the mountains. The spot itself was a poem. The cottage stood a little distance back from the shore, just where the mountains began to rise; before it, gently laving the sands in front of the door, was the storied Adriatic, with its deep-blue waters, and its islands covered with olive-trees, supporting the vines heavy with their luscious fruitage. Behind it were the Dinaric Alps, covered with oak- and pine-trees, with here and there a few acres cleared for the olive and its attendant vine. Robson learned that the cottage was for rent, and Guy earnestly besought him to engage it. Of course Robson made no objection: it was all right if Guy were satisfied,—to him it mattered not where they set up their Lares.

The latter part of September found them domiciled in their new abode. Robson enjoyed the peace of the scene, and Guy seemed never to tire of the new country. But at times the boy was very quiet. He would curl himself up in the window of the cottage, where he could see the sun dancing on the waves, and lose himself in reverie. Hitherto Robson had kept him away from the sea, fearing to awaken memories that were better dead; but he had thought that after nearly eight years of constant change and diversion of thought from England, he might venture to indulge his own fondness for its sight and sound. It

was as a test of Guy's memory that he had proposed the plan they had carried out the previous summer. He began, now they were quietly settled, and the excitement of their Bohemian life was passing away, to fear he had been premature, and as soon as he saw the far-off, absent look in Guy's large, blue eyes, which were so like his mother's, and the gesture he had from his father, of throwing back his dark curls from his forehead, as he settled himself in his favorite window, he would on some pretense rouse him from the train of thought, or call him to some occupation. He never asked Guy of what he was thinking,—he feared the answer.

But the boy's reveries were very confused. Seven years, at that time of life, is a long period, and his recollection of events previous to his leaving England was very dim. Still, he did remember something, and the sight of the sea was somehow mixed up with recollections of a tall gentleman, not at all like "Uncle George," who he used to call "Papa;" of a large house, and plenty of people about; of horses and carriages, and of a boat,—and of a lady very different from the quiet, childish invalid he called in later years "Mamma." But he never spoke to Robson on the subject, never asked him to supply, if he could, the missing links in his chain of thoughts. Perhaps he shrank from exposing them with an inexplicable hesitancy,—perhaps he could not put his wants into words, they were so vague and shadowy.

Music was a passion with the boy, even at this early age. Robson's flute had been their constant companion, and had whiled away many an otherwise sad hour. Guy could play a little upon it, and understood the fingering; but his favorite instrument, the one he thoroughly and fondly loved, was the violin. For two years he had possessed one, and had acquired no mean proficiency upon

it, and had learned to love his instrument like an old friend. Often when alone he had sought to give his sad thoughts expression by the wondrous tones it held, and he and his "uncle" had learned duetts and played them, and studied and worked over their pets through the long winter evenings. For they spent the winter and next summer in their cottage by the sea. Of neighbors, they had none very near, and what there were were peasant families, not very companionable. They did not go into Spalatro oftener than the domestic economy of their ménage required. Robson on one or two occasions gave some medical advice to the neighboring peasants, and thus acquired, without any effort, quite a reputation, and his medical knowledge was called into requisition somewhat oftener than he cared about. But one day an event occurred which gave him assistance and a friend when he most needed it.

A peasant, living some distance from his cottage, sent word to him that he was very ill, and begged "il signor dottore" to come as quickly as possible.

Robson hurried up the mountain, and reached the peasant's cottage a considerable time before sunset. He was detained in the outer room by the wife, who informed him that "Padre Anselmo" was with her husband.

Wishing the "padre" would make a short visit, in order that he could return to Guy before dark, Robson sat down on a stool just outside the door and waited.

Presently the monk came out, and Robson rose to enter the room. He was about to pass with a simple response to the courteous bow of the other, when a glance at the monk's face caused him to look again. Clad in the loose white Franciscan habit the figure was not noticeable; but the face! Perfect it would have been simply from the chiselled features, but there was a depth of

beauty in the expression, a divine light in the large, blue eye that held Robson for an instant spellbound. The cowl was thrown back on the shoulders and showed the dark-brown hair cut close, but even that could not disfigure the lofty brow, from under which those wonderful eyes shone. It was the face of one who walked with God. Such a face as is seldom seen on this earth of ours, save in some Heaven-inspired picture by a Raphael or Da Vinci.

The monk bowed and passed on, addressing a few words to the woman as he left the house, and Robson entered his patient's sick-room.

On his return to his own cottage, Robson overtook Father Anselmo, who was walking slowly, the better to read his office. But he closed the book as the other came up with him, and addressed him some trifling but pleasant remark.

They spoke in French, as Robson was not quite enough at home in Italian to hold any lengthy conversation in that tongue. He discovered that "il signor dottore" was no stranger to the monk, for he had heard his praise sounded from many of the peasants' lips. In the course of conversation Robson asked the monk what countryman he was, for he knew he could not be a native.

"I was born in Brussels," was the reply.

"Belgium? and hiding yourself in this last of all corners of the earth!" exclaimed Robson.

"God can be served here as well as elsewhere," replied the monk. "There is much good to be done among the peasants."

"Yes, but you are lost to all else; how can you bear the isolation?"

"There is no isolation with God." Father Anselmo raised his eyes to heaven, and his face looked as if they

had almost pierced the skies and seen the glory of the Infinite.

Robson was silent, and in a few moments they were at the monastery gate. It was in a different part of the mountain from his usual walks, and for this reason he had been ignorant of its existence. The building was a plain stone structure with a massive gateway, which bore this legend cut in the stone:

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

"Is that your motto, Father?" asked Robson.

"It is the inspiration which has drawn us here, and by which we strive to guide our actions," replied the monk, simply. "Will you not enter?"

"Not to-night, thank you,—my—my nephew——" His eyes fell before the clear ones of the monk as he told the lie. "My nephew waits, and I am late."

"Another time, then?" said Father Anselmo.

"Another time, gladly," replied Robson; and, as he turned away, the clouds that had gathered round the setting sun burst asunder, and the golden radiance of his last beams flooded the old stone building, bringing into full relief the words above the gate:

"WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN, IF HE SHALL GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD, AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL?"

CHAPTER IV.

It was not many days before Robson and his "nephew" paid a visit to Father Anselmo. It was a pleasant change to the former to find in this out-of-the-way corner of the world a man of intelligence, cultivation, and refinement, and, notwithstanding the prejudices he had always entertained against monks and their church, he found him a most agreeable companion.

Guy or "Giulio" soon became a prime favorite with all within the monastery walls, and more particularly with the organist, who gave him lessons upon his instrument, and held the boy spell-bound by the stories of different composers, which he would relate to him *apropos* of some of their compositions. Often did the "twilight gray" creep in through the windows of the organ-loft and find the boy curled up in one of the seats, his head resting on his hands and his large blue eyes fixed upon the player's fingers, lost in the dreams which some melody of Beethoven or Mozart, or some fugue by Bach, would evoke.

One evening Robson was alone, Guy not having returned from the monastery, where he had been spending the day. (It was in the fall; they had been in their cottage just a year.) Their one servant had been to Spalatro and brought thence a late English paper, that had been left by a chance traveler and had fallen into the hands of one of his acquaintances. Robson seated himself on the bench outside the door, and looked over the familiar characters. The heat of the day was over, and the sun was sinking into the Adriatic, from which came a deli-

cious balmy air. Back, up the mountain, the path through which Guy was expected gleamed here and there among the oaks and pines, its white sand looking like a thread of silver.

It was a thoroughly peaceful scene, familiar in all its tones and colors and sounds to Robson, yet none the less enjoyed by him before the newspaper was brought. And it was destined to live long in his memory in the after-years as the last happy (and he was comparatively happy now) hour he was ever to know.

Letting the light die out over the waters of the tideless sea unnoted, in his eagerness to learn something of what life meant in that far-off England, from which he was a voluntary but regretful exile, Robson glanced over the paper; and presently, as he read a certain paragraph, it dropped from his hands, and he buried his face in them and groaned. Then he sprang up and paced the ground before the cottage with long, quick strides, and his face bore an expression of great anxiety. As he thus walked, Guy's slight figure, clad in the picturesque dress of the country, was seen descending the mountain path, and quickly Robson picked up the paper he had let fall, and put it in his pocket. Guy had some message from Father Anselmo, and delivered it without noticing his "uncle's" manner, and was turning away, when Robson called him back.

"Giulio, would you like to remain for awhile altogether with Father Anselmo? I have sudden business calling me to England, and this time I must travel alone."

"To England! Oh, Uncle George, take me with you! please—please do!"

"I cannot, my boy, or I would. God knows I have no wish to part with you."

"But why not, uncle; why can't I go? You know I

have forgotten all about England, and I do so want to see the place where I was born!"

"Giulio, my boy, I cannot. Don't press me, for I cannot take you. But you will be happy with Father Anselmo, and you will not fret at my absence?"

The last question was asked in a beseeching tone. There was no sulkiness about Guy, and he yielded at once.

"Well, if I can't, I can't. Oh, yes, I'll be all right up with Father Anselmo."

All that night was spent, while Guy was wrapped in childhood's peaceful slumbers, by Robson in looking over papers and writing; sheet after sheet was covered, and still he wrote on, until the dawn, peeping in at the little window, warned him to take some rest.

As soon as their simple breakfast was over the two set out on their walk to the monastery, carrying between them Guy's slight wardrobe and little treasures. On their arrival, Robson was closeted a long time with Father Anselmo, while the boy sought the organist, whom he found in his loft looking over some scores.

When Robson had finished his business with Father Anselmo, they sought the boy together, and his uncle lingered until nearly nightfall before he could bring himself to say good-by. When they did part, Guy's lip trembled and his eyes were very bright, but he kept the tears back, at least until he was alone. Robson took him in his arms and pressed him close to his breast, then with one long look tore himself away. Had he a prescience of what was to happen ere they met again?

On his return to the cottage, Robson dismissed the servant after charging him to keep the little place in his mind, and care for it until his return, which he said was very indefinite: he might be back in a month or six weeks,

but it might be longer. As soon as the man was gone, Robson again drew the paper from his pocket and re-read the paragraph which had affected him so deeply. It was as follows:

"A most singular and fortunate event has occurred. The friends of Guy Charteris, Esq., of Charteris Manor, Devonshire, will be delighted to know that the rumor of his loss in the Alectro, nine years ago, was a mistake; the gentleman is alive and well, and has returned to England with his wife, an American lady (whom he married on the 25*th of May*, 1849). His reappearance is a timely one, for he is the next heir to the Earldom of Straithness, in Scotland, the last holder of the title being a distant cousin and the last of the direct line. As our readers already know, the demise of the late earl was sudden: he was thrown from his horse, and so seriously injured as to survive only a few hours. As our readers will see, by glancing at the peerage, the deceased nobleman was in his twenty-fourth year, and had been married only five months."

This was the intelligence which had flashed up at Robson from the paper, and caused his hurried determination to return to England. Now, for the first time since he had read it, he was alone,—alone with his memories and his remorse; alone with his conscience and his God.

The sun sank into the glistening waves; night's cooling zephyrs sprang up; the flowers closed their petals and drooped their heads; the birds sang their even song of praise, and sought their lofty resting-places; yet the sobbing of the waves upon the beach never ceased, and the restlessness of the sea was like the restlessness of him who paced its shore the whole night through, struggling with his agony. And nature, in her beauty and her majesty, had no sympathy with the human sufferer. How can she have, made as she was for man as he came forth from

the hands of his Creator, not for his fallen, sinful humanity?

The earliest dawn saw Robson on his way to Trieste; thence, as fast as steam could bear him, to England.

CHAPTER V.

GUY CHARTERIS bade good-bye to Miss Thornton at her uncle's door, and turned his sad steps—whither?

A stranger in a strange land, he felt with double force his desolation. He knew that no one in all that broad continent had thought for him; no one expected him; he had no loving breast to turn to and breathe out his sorrow. Neither in the new land he had sought nor the old one he had left was there a human heart beating responsive to his own. He had never realized this before, and now the idea came upon him with appalling force. He had been an orphan from his sixteenth year, with no relations save some distant ones in Scotland whom he had never seen, and for whom he had no particular affection nor felt any particular interest; but marrying as he did before he was twenty, and living a life of quiet retirement and social enjoyment of only such friends as he and Clare cared to draw around them, until the fearful blow that had shattered his happiness forever, he had not realized how really alone he was outside of that charmed home circle. But as he turned away from Judge Neally's door and descended the steps into the street, he sighed and wondered what he should do next. He returned to the hotel to which he had sent his valise, for he had not replaced more

than was absolutely necessary of his lost baggage, and spent a sad and lonely evening with, except Shott, no companion but his heavy thoughts.

Rousing himself at last from his reverie, he was about to ring for Harris, when he remembered where he was, and smiled bitterly as he proceeded to open his valise himself. While he was about this unusual act, one of the hotel-servants knocked at the door and entered, carrying a coal-scuttle in his hand and a couple of towels thrown over his arm. Seeing the "furrin gent" fumbling at the lock, as if he was unused to opening it, he kindly offered to do it for him.

"Thank you, my man," said Guy, who was always considerate of his inferiors.

"And maybe the jintleman would be looking for a *valley?*" asked the waiter in a broad brogue.

"It would be just as well to secure one before I leave," replied Guy. "Do you know of a servant I could hire to travel with me for the next few years?"

"Faix and it's meeself as will be that same, sir."

Charteris looked at the man attentively, and read his character in his open, pleasant face.

"But are you not engaged here as waiter? and do you know what is required of a gentleman's servant?"

"Sure and it's meesel' as should know, and none better. Wasn't I own man to Sir Thornton Allen, and niver a lavin' of him till his death in '36, and thin I jist took to roamin' and comed over here; and, sir, as for my place *here*, why there's nagurs upon nagurs as would be glad to get it sure, and it was only to-day I was a thinkin' of lavin', sir!"

"Well, I'll see about it to-morrow; your name is——?"

"Dennis O'Flaherty, sir."

"Very well, Dennis, we'll see what arrangement can

be made to-morrow, and now you need not remain any longer."

During this short colloquy, Dennis had shown himself not only quick-handed, but perfectly *au fait* in the business for which he offered himself, and Mr. Charteris found everything that he needed for his toilet taken out of the valise and arranged neatly to his hand.

Two days after, he and Dennis started on their travels. He wandered over the broad continent at his will, without any fixed plan, or any desire to rest; yet he could not find the forgetfulness he sought, the memory was ever with him of all the happiness and hope and love that had died out of his life on that fearful September afternoon.

Over the vast prairies of the West; down the "Father of Waters," from its source to its mouth; through the cotton plantations of the South; and beneath the burning sun of Cuba, did Dennis O'Flaherty follow his sad master in the vain quest of Lethean waters,—as vain a quest as that of the Spaniards of old for the fountain of Perpetual Youth through the wilds of Florida.

Seven years were spent in this aimless wandering, and then Guy Charteris found himself once more in New York. He had only been in the city a few days, when he was stricken down by an illness he had been fighting off for some time. Dennis nursed him as devotedly as he had served him, but what man's nursing-care can equal a woman's? Attentively as the physician watched and Dennis cared for him, there was something wanting, and the sick man missed the gentle voice, the softly falling step, the soothing touch which, once before, on the only occasion upon which he had needed nursing, ministered to his wants. He did not get better, and the doctor was almost in despair when Providence interposed, and the sick man was saved.

CHAPTER VI.

We left Margaret Thornton just returned from that hapless sea-voyage, delivered by her temporary guardian into her uncle's care. While the three years had been passed in sad, heart-broken wanderings by Guy Charteris, the wheel of fortune—the waves of life—had not stood still for her. She mourned deeply and truly for her father. She had nursed and watched him for years, and all her tender care and thought for him had grown so much like second nature that she felt the loss doubly. This trip to Europe had been taken in the vain hope of saving his life, and now it was all over. Her occupation for so many years was gone; faithfully she had done her duty, and now—was she to meet with her reward?

Yes; but in a way she never dreamed of.

Years before, when the first symptoms of the disease had just begun to show themselves in her father, and they regarded as a passing temporary illness what was to end his life—when, too, life with all its hopes and youth with all its anticipations were opening out before her like a tale of wondrous fairie-lore—Margaret Thornton had been wooed and won. But she could not, would not leave her father *then*, and year after year passed, and still the hope was hers that *next year* she certainly could yield to her lover's importunities and crown his happiness and her own, without neglecting her filial duties. The time, however, never came. And by degrees the lover's first fervor cooled; he became more the kind friend—the tender brother—gradually grew cooler even in these feelings, until

the European trip, necessitating an absence of three or four years, weaned his heart from her entirely, and he sought happiness in another love. For some time before their return-voyage, his letters to Margaret had been growing irregular, and at length ceased. But she attributed it more to the changing life they led, and hoped every thing would be made right when they were together again. She was not prepared then for the news that met her of his marriage.

So when she once more set foot upon her native land, there was no one for whom her coming made sunlight in a dark day, whose eyes rested on her with fond, attentive gaze, striving with love's untiring zeal to win a smile again upon the sad and weary lips.

Her uncle was a bachelor, by profession a lawyer, and immersed in business. After a cold kiss of welcome, a shake of the hand, a few inquiries as to how she had got along and some regrets, politely, but merely as a matter of form, expressed, that his brother-in-law had not at least been able to reach home, he handed his niece over to his housekeeper and thought he had done his duty.

Thus, the first year of her mourning and her return to what she still, from habit, called "home," was rendered doubly sad by her utter isolation. For who has not felt the changes that occur among familiar scenes during a few years' absence, and realized the truth of Longfellow's words:

> "Season and scene come back again,
> And outward things unchanged remain.
> The rest we cannot reinstate,
> Ourselves we cannot recreate;
> Nor set our souls to the same key
> Of the remembered harmony."

And Margaret had been five years away, and, besides, she was no longer a young girl. She was twenty-four.

Youth and its dreams and fancies were over for her, and yet she had no ties, no family duties, to take their place. The time hung heavy, sometimes, on her hands; wandering through the old house, and trying to read or sew; or walking the familiar streets, that still were so unfamiliar; meeting friends and acquaintances whom she had known under such different circumstances, now busy with their own pleasures or duties and almost like strangers. No wonder she began to feel desperate and to pray for some change.

The change came in the second year after her return, in the sudden death of her uncle. By his will she was left his heiress, and found herself quite a wealthy woman. But the wealth soon melted away, swamped in one of those great crises that happen so frequently. And so she was obliged to earn her daily bread by any means within her power.

She taught music, and tramped her weary round from house to house and patiently bore with the tortures of her nerves as her pupils pounded through their lessons. Meantime her former lover was a widower, and at liberty to claim her promise once more if he had wished; but he did not—the years passed and he gave no sign. Perhaps she had expected he would. She never said so even to herself; on the contrary, she tried to drive the thought of him away when it came unbidden to her mind. Only when she heard of his wife's death, there was a strange swelling in her heart, that was not sympathy for him altogether, but an indescribable feeling of pain and pleasure, and memory went busily to work recalling all the sweet scenes and hours of the long ago. Then as month succeeded month and he gave no thought to her, her heart sank down like lead into her bosom; she plucked the last faded hope out of it with a fierce scorn at herself and it, and went

her way. But our hearts play us queer tricks sometimes; and as this state of feeling died away, she found herself recurring more and more frequently to the memory of Guy Charteris, and wondering what had become of him. She thought with a pensive tenderness of his kindness at the time of her great trouble, and that he was the only one who was truly sympathetic—opening the recent wound of his own sorrow, so great and crushing, to help her to bear hers the easier. She thought and thought, and the more she thought the stronger grew the desire to see him again. Not that she ever expected to do so, or had any dreams for the future with which he was connected. For was she not now thirty, and had not the slight attractiveness her youth might have bestowed upon her face gone?

One day she was giving a music-lesson to the daughter of one of the most distinguished physicians in the city, when the father of her pupil came in in a state of great excitement, and sought the parlor where his wife was sitting and where the lesson was in progress. He said, "I have just come from that Englishman at the Astor, Jane, and I am very anxious about him; he needs a female nurse; not one of these hired women—I don't think even a Sister of Charity would do, though I mean to go to the hospital this afternoon and ask for one; but I wish, if he had a wife, she could be with him now!"

Margaret's pupil stopped playing, and Margaret turned to the doctor.

"Poor fellow!" returned the doctor's wife. "I wish something could be done for him. Can't he be moved here?"

"No, he can't; or I'd had him at the Sisters' hospital long ago—that's the best place for him. That valet of his is as good as gold and as faithful, but poor Charteris needs a woman to nurse him back to life."

"Charteris!" Margaret started up; "O doctor!" then she sat down again.

"Do you know him, Miss Thornton?"

"Yes—no—I don't know—I thought maybe it was the same gentleman who—who—came over with us."

"Ah, yes, I remember," replied the doctor. "Well, maybe he is; he has an Irish servant, Dennis."

"When we were together he had no servant; so it may not be he. Is he tall and slight, with a small head, thickly curling brown hair, and light-blue eyes?"

"Yes! that is he! Come, get your bonnet and come with me," exclaimed the doctor.

"But, Henry," began his wife—

"To the devil with the proprieties when there's a human life to save, my dear. I beg your pardon, Miss Margaret. Not another word, Jane—Miss Margaret, shut up the piano and adjourn your lessons to some future time; this hour is to be devoted every day to my patient, and a few others, too, if I can manage it."

And thus it was that Margaret Thornton took her place at Guy Charteris's bedside; and soon, as the doctor said, for more than one hour a day—for all day. For "whispering tongues can poison truth," and some lie or other was spread by degrees, and one by one, on some pretext or another, pupil after pupil was withdrawn. Margaret never knew exactly why,—some plausible reason was always given; but the doctor seemed to know, and as first one and then another was taken away, he swore many an angry oath at the narrow-minded fools, and ended by insisting upon Margaret making his house her home.

But we anticipate slightly. Margaret was a natural nurse, and did her duty tenderly and carefully. The kind doctor rubbed his hands and looked satisfied and hopeful over his patient, and praised his nurse to all. Guy

called her "Clare," and would scarcely let her leave him; and when he woke at length from the fell disease, his hand was gently clasped in hers, and her face was the first his natural glance rested on.

CHAPTER VII.

MARGARET THORNTON sat in her room at kindly, bluff Dr. Schroeder's, her hands lying idly in her lap, and her eyes fixed upon the waving tree-tops that hid the street from her sight. Not that she saw them or cared that they stood between her and the busy life below; her thoughts were far, far away, and scalding tears were streaming down her cheeks. Guy Charteris needed her care no longer, but she had only one scholar left, and she felt herself a pensioner upon the kindness of the physician and his wife; and though everything was done by them and by their only child, her one remaining pupil, to make her feel contented, she could not be so. It had gradually dawned upon her when it was too late *why* her services were no longer needed by her scholars, and at first a proud anger had prevented her from realizing the full extent of the mischief. It was only when Dr. Schroeder, through his wife, insisted upon her making her home with them, and insisted, too, upon remunerating her for her instruction to Carrie as before, that she began to see it. She felt deeply grateful to them,—but none the less dark and bitter did the future look to her.

And now while she sits there, absorbed in her sad thoughts so deeply that she does not notice the gathering

darkness of the early winter evening, there is a gentle knock at the door, to which she is equally oblivious,—a scratch, and a short, low bark, to which, also, she is deaf,—then the door is opened gently, pushed open more rudely, and Shott rushes in and up to her, and effectually rouses her by the touch of his cold nose against her cheek.

"Why, Margaret, all in the dark!" exclaimed the cheery voice of her hostess. Then as she drew near and saw that the girl was so overcome she could not answer, the kind arms were around her and her weary head was drawn to rest upon a bosom throbbing with tender sympathy.

"My poor child, what is the matter?"

"The matter" was not so easily told, still by gentle and judicious questioning the sad heart was relieved of its burden, so far as could be done by "giving sorrow words."

That evening the doctor and his wife had a long conversation, the result of which was a conspiracy to bring about a certain event, to the success of which they devoted their most ardent efforts. The next day the doctor paid a visit to his ex-patient, as he had been in the habit of doing in a friendly way, though it was some weeks since he had ceased to do so professionally. Of course Guy inquired for Margaret, and made some laughing remark about Shott's fondness for her, and hoped the dog's frequent visits did not inconvenience the family.

"By no means," replied the doctor; "but why cannot the master follow the dog's example?"

Guy colored up; he had been a guest in no home since his own was made desolate, but he did not notice the *double entendre* of the remark.

"I think," continued the doctor, "it is but fair that some of my visits should be returned, and I think you

ought to make some little return to Miss Margaret for all she has sacrificed for you."

"Sacrificed for me!" exclaimed Guy, starting up.

"Yes, sacrificed for you," repeated the doctor. He then gave Guy an account of the cloud which had rested upon Margaret ever since she had devoted herself to nursing him, and of the destitute condition to which she would have been reduced had not he, the narrator, felt it incumbent upon him to repair as much as possible the mischief he had caused.

Charteris heard all this with amazement and exceeding regret, and he at once determined to put aside all selfish love of seclusion, and to express his gratitude by word and act to his kind nurse.

"I've got the wedge in, Jane," said the doctor gleefully to his wife that night, rubbing his hands over the library-fire. "I've got the wedge in—now to drive it home!"

The next day Guy called upon Mrs. Schroeder and Margaret, but saw only the former; the latter was suffering with a severe nervous headache, the result of the excited feelings so long repressed, to which she had given way two nights before. This visit was followed by an invitation to dinner, which Guy accepted, and on which occasion he saw Margaret. The ice once broken, he did not need much pressing to repeat his visits, and meeting, as he did, a refined and cultivated circle of choice spirits at the doctor's, he could not but be pleased and drawn out more and more from his sadness and seclusion. He noticed Margaret particularly, and saw how she shrank from society,—even from that which gathered under the roof that sheltered her and in which she was safe,—he saw and pitied.

Nor was the doctor disposed to repent the design

formed so hastily, yet the wisdom of which was proved by every passing day. For the more he saw of Guy Charteris, the more he admired, respected, and loved him, while Margaret was as another daughter to him. Before the New Year he and his wife were confirmed match-makers, and enjoyed their novel profession as much as a child does a new toy. So it came to pass that while Robson and Guy were watching the last sad months of poor Clare's life, the husband and father was spending day after day at Margaret Thornton's side. Not that he acknowledged that he loved her, or called the attraction which drew him to her anything but gratitude and—pity,—forgetting to what the last sentiment is said to be akin. Nor did he make up his mind to take the last step rashly. He knew her well, had studied her character closely, and could find in it nothing unworthy of respect. He had been drawn into life and its interests once more, and felt that the future would look doubly dark if he continued to lead his present lonely existence; that he was yet too young to do without a home and home interests. Margaret knew nothing of Charteris Manor and its sad memories,—need never know; he could become naturalized and use himself to the customs of his adopted country, and live and die a citizen of the United States. Actuated by these motives, and fully determined to do his duty, and make up by kindness for the love he could not give, he asked her to be his wife.

And Margaret?

She loved him; loved him devotedly, deeply, fondly, with a passionate tenderness which belied her thirty years, and left the feeling she had formerly cherished far, far behind. For was he not worthy of all a true woman's heart? But her love did not blind her to the want of it on his part, and this clear-sightedness made her hesitate.

The letter in which he asked her to be his wife—for he wrote, he could not bring himself to *speak* the words a second time—was manly and tender, and would have satisfied any ordinary woman, but not Margaret Thornton. She read it over once, twice, then laid it down upon the table and rested her head upon the page, while she meditated long and deeply. Her heart throbbed at the thought of belonging to him, of giving herself into his keeping for all time, of never being separated, of the joy that all this would bring her; then she asked herself would this satisfy her? Did not her passionate love crave something else beside—some faint return of love? and would it not be a living death to live without it? Two days passed before she could frame an answer, and this delay rendered Charteris impatient,—he, man-like, thinking that as he had made up his mind on the subject, she should be equally prompt. The second note, like the first, lacked the *one* thing which, shown ever so faintly, would have scattered her hesitancy to the winds.

"I do not see why you should not return a favorable answer," said Mrs. Schroeder, to whom Margaret had in her perplexity turned, deeming it due, under the circumstances, that her kind friend should be made aware of all that related to her. "It is a match few would refuse."

"My dear Mrs. Schroeder," replied Margaret, "Mr. Charteris does me the honor of asking me to be his wife, but he does not love me."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed her friend; "what silly notion is that?"

"It is no silly notion, believe me; it is a fact of which I am most painfully assured."

"Margaret Thornton, can you talk such nonsense in the face of two such letters as these?"

"Indeed it is no nonsense——"

"And indeed it is. No, my dear, don't let any such silly idea take root in your mind. Why, you don't know what a disappointment your refusal would be to us all. So write the little word 'yes,' and make the poor man happy and yourself, too." So saying, the kind lady took her departure, little dreaming of the sting she had left behind her.

"Disappointment to us!" The words rang in Margaret's ears, and reminded her of her real situation, which the kindness of her friends had lately caused her to forget sometimes, and the sensitive nature was alarmed. Better anything than that,—for where else could she go? what could she do? Her resolution was taken at once, and Guy Charteris's offer was accepted.

They were married on the morning of the 25th of May, 1849.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHARTERIS wrote to Mr. Upham announcing his marriage, and also his intention of making his home in the United States and renouncing England. To the first item in this letter the lawyer wrote a congratulatory answer, as in duty bound, but remonstrated with him earnestly against his decision to give up his native country. He represented to him that Charteris sadly needed his presence, and that, having taken upon himself new ties, he had entailed upon himself new responsibilities, which he had no right to ignore; nor ought he forget the claims of those who might come after him. So urgently did he write that Guy was moved by his earnestness, and answered saying that, in view of the possible responsibilities,

his decision was not to be considered final,—that events might occur which would cause him to revoke it.

Margaret had nothing to complain of in her husband that the world could see, and the good doctor and his wife congratulated themselves upon the success of their plan. In their eyes she was a loving and beloved wife, with every prospect of a happy life before her. No one but Margaret could see that there was a chamber in her husband's heart locked, barred, and bolted against her, to which she saw no hope of finding the "Open sesame," and that chamber was the very core,—the centre,—upon which every truly happy wife must sit enthroned. But she had married him knowing this, and she submitted to her lot patiently, withholding none of the love she had now a right to show, but encompassing him, as it were, with it, seeing him only through the light of it. She had no secrets from him. Before she married him she told him of her early love and sorrow. There was not a thought of her heart that she kept from him, except one, and that was the knowledge of his want of love for her. He had no idea that she missed anything in him, or craved more than he was willing to give. So passed the first eighteen months of their marriage.

Mr. Upham repeatedly wrote to Guy urging him to return to England, and finally the death of his agent at Charteris induced him to decide upon it. Even now he did not tell Margaret all; he represented to her the necessity for his going to England, and offered if she dreaded the voyage to leave her and return after he had attended to the most pressing business. She knew that he had property in England, and that he was a gentleman by birth and education; but of Charteris Manor and its glories she was totally ignorant. But two things at length decided him to return to his long-neglected home, and

to resume his duties to his property, and the old English life: one was his anxiety that his child, if it proved a son, should be born beneath his own native skies—and the other was the reading of the sudden death of the young Earl of Straithness, by a fall from his horse.

We have seen his return duly announced.

CHAPTER IX.

On his arrival in England, Robson made inquiries as to whether Sir Gilbert Forrester was at Brandon Towers, or at his wife's estate of Stoke-Leighton, in Staffordshire. Finding he was at the latter place, he wrote, requesting Sir Gilbert to come immediately to London, or he would visit Staffordshire, as he was most anxious to see him. He added in a postscript that he was alone.

It was a pity he could not have seen Sir Gilbert's face as he read the postscript. Had he done so he would have been forewarned.

Fatigued by his sudden and hurried journey, and affected doubtless by the anxious state of mind in which he had passed the last few days, Robson found himself really sick on his arrival, and while waiting for the answer to his letter.

It came by telegraph. Sir Gilbert would be in town in two days. When he came he found Robson prostrated by a nervous fever, and he remained with him three days. There was nothing in his manner to alarm Robson; he seemed much more quiet and self-restrained than in former years. But Robson did not get any better

in the three days; in fact, before the second was passed he began to have very strange feelings and to be seriously uneasy; by the evening of the third day he was so much worse that he knew, when too late, that his food or medicine had been tampered with. The night of the third day his fever had augmented so much that he became unconscious of his surroundings. When he came to himself he was in a strange room, with a strange nurse in attendance. It did not require a long time to enable him to discover that he was the inmate of a private lunatic asylum.

When he realized this appalling fact, Robson's feelings were a mixture of despair and rage, impossible to describe. His first thought was for Guy, and he felt thankful the boy was in safe and kind hands; but he was anxious, knowing the miserly penuriousness of Gilbert Forrester, lest the allowance made him should be withdrawn. Fortunately, he had insisted upon a large sum at first, which was nearly three times more than was sufficient for their modest wants; and the surplus, having been invested carefully, had by this time amounted to a comfortable sum of itself.

Before leaving Guy, Robson had informed Father Anselmo of as much of the boy's history as he deemed prudent, and had also left with him a sealed packet to be delivered to Guy on his twenty-first birthday. He had told the monk, also, how and where the surplus money was invested, the sum of, and how the regular allowance was received. So that, in case of anything happening to him,—though the reality of what did happen was far from his thoughts,—all would go well for his charge.

He knew Father Anselmo would not be a faithless guardian, and that Guy's education and training were in good hands; still at times he felt heart-sick with anxiety.

As soon as he was well enough to leave his room, he set about trying to discover a way to escape. To protest against his imprisonment, and assert his sanity, would be, he knew, only a waste of breath, and he did not attempt it.

The nurses were kind, and so was the physician who had the direction of the institution. The latter Robson soon found had been duped by Sir Gilbert, and really believed him to be the monomaniac he had been represented. He shrank from and avoided as much as possible the company of those harmless inmates who, like himself, were allowed the freedom of the house and grounds, and, by showing pleasure in the doctor's society, seeking it when he could, and conversing on various and interesting subjects, endeavored to remove the wrong impression he had received. After more than a year's imprisonment he began to hope he was succeeding, when the physician died suddenly, and, his successor being a far different character and a total stranger, Robson's courage failed and he grew dejected and morbid.

He now knew there was no chance of escape, except through the luck of an accident, and for long, long weary years he waited and watched.

BOOK THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

CHARTERIS met with a warm welcome from Mr. Upham, upon whom he still imposed silence as to his reappearance, and with whose family he left Margaret, while he went down to Devonshire to prepare for her residence there. He shrank from the task, but it had to be done, and the sooner the better.

Who can describe, what words can do justice to, the agony with which he gazed upon the familiar scene? So changed, and yet the same! Here was the terrace where she had paced at his side so often in fond and loving talk; there Guy, escaping from the nurse, had, with a shout of baby glee, rushed to meet him; another place had been Clare's flower-garden, and some plants, set there by her hands, had grown and flourished in all the years, and seemed to be holding out their arms to him and calling for her; and the house! Was there a room or a hall, a nook or corner, that her presence had not sanctified? For the time Margaret was well-nigh forgotten.

He had Clare's morning-room, where everything lay as he had left it, dismantled, and made it a receptacle for all her belongings to the veriest trifle, and then closed it up,

intending never to open it again. Then he had the house thoroughly renovated and refurnished, with much kindly thought for Margaret's fancies and her comfort. The boat-house had been removed entirely, and all traces of its ever having been there also, and he had ordered the planting of a thick hedge along the shore, which shut out the sight of the river. These changes had been made years before, when he first left the country, consequently the hedge was thick now. The woods on the other side were thicker than ever, and the servants told him that Sir Gilbert had never been to Brandon since he left Charteris. Having arranged things to his satisfaction, Guy returned to London; there he had much to do before he could take possession of his Scottish earldom. It was the first time he had been absent from Margaret since his marriage, and he was surprised at the pleasure the sight of her gave him, and the satisfaction he felt at having some one to *come home to.* As for poor Margaret, the very intensity of her delight made her shy; the fear of annoying him by any display of feeling caused her to repress hers, and to a common observer the eagerness was all on his side.

Of course, it being September, all the world was out of town, and when Guy paid a visit to his old club he expected to meet no one. The porter eyed him curiously as he passed through the vestibule, but as there had been several new members elected lately, with whose persons he was not familiar, and as Guy seemed perfectly at home, he let him pass unchallenged. As he entered the smoking-room, so little changed in the years he had been away, a strange feeling came over him, his head swam, and he sank into a chair and made some inarticulate sound, which attracted the attention of a gentleman sitting near, who, in turning round, started up, looked closely at Guy, now

ghastly pale, and took a step nearer, when Shott, who had followed closely at his master's heels, sprang up and snarled at him. It was Gilbert Forrester.

"Guy—Guy Charteris, are you living man or spirit? speak!" exclaimed Sir Gilbert.

His voice roused Guy, who looked up and smiled sadly but scornfully.

"Yes," said he, "it is I, Forrester; a little longer and the two years had quite expired!"

"You have a good memory, Charteris;—I—had—forgotten."

"But I could not forget. Upham tells me that you married—soon—soon——"

"Yes, and am now a widower. My only child, a little girl of two years old, is at Stoke-Leighton with her grandfather. But you? how is it with you, Guy?"

Recovering from his surprise, Sir Gilbert Forrester's quick mind had taken in all the probabilities of the situation, and his craft and cunning were on the alert to seize any advantage. It must be his rôle now to be on friendly terms with Charteris.

Before his question was answered, several other old members crowded round, eager to welcome the dead-alive back to his old haunts, and Guy had much to do answering questions and receiving information. The next two hours were a heavy ordeal for him, and he was glad when it was over, and he could make his escape. Glad, too, that he was to start for Scotland so soon, and so avoid much more of it.

The next day the notice appeared in the *Times* which George Robson was to read two months later, with what result we have seen.

As yet Guy had said no word to Margaret. When he went down to Charteris he had told her why he went,—

to arrange matters for her reception at his own house. But it might have been a log hut for all she knew to the contrary. Mr. Upham had informed his wife and daughter of Guy's desire to keep her in ignorance of his rank, and so they never alluded to it, although many a time they were on the verge of revealing the secret. As soon as the announcement was made in the *Times*, Guy decided to tell his wife, as any further secrecy would be almost impossible, and was unnecessary. Indeed, he felt she had a right to be angry at his long silence.

"My dear Margaret," said he, "I must go down into Scotland before we get settled in Devonshire. Do you think you can bear the journey, or shall I leave you again with our kind friends?"

"I would prefer going with you, Mr. Charteris," she replied, "unless it is best I should not."

"That is just as you please; if you have recovered sufficiently from the sea voyage, there is no objection to your going."

If he would only say he wanted her to go,—that he missed her society,—how her sad heart would have been lightened!

"Then I will go."

She had never called him "Guy," and he had never seemed to notice the omission.

"You must have a maid to attend upon you, and we must start day after to-morrow."

"A maid, Mr. Charteris! why, I never have needed one before."

"No; in the United States the customs of society are very different. We are in England now, and you know the old adage about Rome and the Romans. A maid is a necessary appendage to every lady, much more to the wife of an earl."

"An earl? Are you—am I—what do you mean, Mr. Charteris?"

"I mean this, Margaret, and should have told you all long ago. You took me, my dear wife, very much upon trust, for even kind Dr. Schroeder knew nothing of my antecedents, and, believe me, I have not been oblivious of your generous confidence."

"No, no—I married a gentleman—what more?"

"My dear, it might have turned out that you had married the greatest rascal that walks unhung; but it so happens that you married—me. You were kind enough to say just now what you thought me, and as the description is very flattering and I never contradict a lady, we will let it pass."

He smiled brightly at her from the rug where he had been standing, and then, seeing her turn pale, hastened over to the sofa and took a seat beside her.

"Don't be frightened, Margaret. I ought to have told you all this earlier; but at first, I never—I thought to make my home in the States—never to see England again, and as you were satisfied to take me for better or worse, as I was, it did not seem worth while to tell you more. You married, dear, a gentleman—for I hope I will never prove myself anything else—of large landed property in Devonshire—Charteris Manor having been in his family since the times of Henry VII.,—who happened to have a distant cousin in Scotland, the Earl of Straithness; this young man, whom I never saw, married last February on his twenty-fourth birthday, and doubtless thought the future promised all that earth could give of happiness. Just before we sailed for England, I saw the account of an impromptu steeple-chase, gotten up at Straithness by the young earl and his friends. The horse my poor cousin rode missed his hedge, and, falling, injured his rider so

much that he died in a few hours, and the shock to his young wife was so great that she was brought to death's door, her baby born prematurely, and so all her hopes destroyed at once." His voice trembled over the last words, the memory of his own past sorrow surged over him.

"Poor thing!" exclaimed Margaret.

"Indeed, it is a sad case, Margaret."

"Can we not go to her?"

"She is still at Straithness, as yet not recovered. It is for this reason that I am anxious to go down there, that she may be fully satisfied to remain at the castle as long as she wishes to—and—I thought—you might comfort her. She is an only child, her mother dead, and she is without relations of her own sex to be near her in her trouble."

"Let us go at once, Mr.—my lord!" replied Margaret.

"Lady Straithness must ask her kind friend, Mrs Upham, to assist her in the choice of a maid," he replied, smiling at her hesitancy, yet never suggesting the little word that would have shown so much.

They did not remain long in Scotland: only long enough for Margaret to learn to feel a deep interest in the young widowed countess, and to enable Charteris to make all necessary business arrangements.

CHAPTER II.

On their return from the north, Guy and his wife remained only one night in London, and then journeyed down to the Manor.

Margaret would have been more than human had she been indifferent to the splendors of her future home. Not even the earl's castle up there in Scotland surpassed the more humbly-titled Manor-house; and as they alighted at the entrance, and her husband stood upon the steps to receive her, she felt for a moment a thrill of real delight as she looked around.

"Welcome to your husband's home, Margaret," said Guy.

His voice was tenderer than it had ever been before, and she looked up to see if she could read in his eyes the love she prayed and longed for—that she hoped she might find some day. For she found when too late that she had assigned herself too heavy a task, one which was breaking her heart. Loving her husband as she did, it was an unendurable torment to find day by day it was too true that he did not care for her and never had. Still, as he *was* her husband, she could not help hoping that *one day* he would *need* her love, and so grow to love her. So she looked up at him hoping to see what she longed for in his eyes. But no; there was no change, and the tremor in his voice was caused, doubtless, by the memory of Clare, as she had last blessed her husband's vision, standing on those very steps. She made no answer to his

greeting, save a simple "thank you," and passed into the hall where the servants were assembled to welcome the master and his new wife. She felt very desolate as she looked around at the strange faces, but made an effort and had a kind word for the old butler, Benson, and Mrs. Childs, the housekeeper.

"My lady is fatigued, Mrs. Childs; will you see her to her room?" said Guy, when this ceremony was over, seeing Margaret looked pale and weary.

"Certainly, my lord; will my lady please to follow me?"

Guy gave Margaret his arm to the foot of the stairs, and then said,—

"Do not make an effort to dress to-night, Margaret; you had better rest—"

His manner was kind, but that was all; he turned away to speak to Benson.

Mrs. Childs showed Margaret into her chamber, and, pushing open a door, told her her dressing-room was here, then opening another door, revealing a small apartment, said. "This is my lord's dressing-room, and this"—going through it and opening a door opposite to the one she had entered—"is my lord's chamber; and now, my lady, let me help you off with your bonnet, and I will send you up a cup of tea and a biscuit."

Margaret sank down in a chair and let the kind old woman remove her wrappings, almost unconscious of what she was doing.

The tea was sent up, but she could not touch it. Nor did she have any appetite for the dinner, which perhaps she might have tasted, had she known that Guy selected himself what he thought she would most fancy. When the servant came up to remove the dishes, she found they had not been touched.

Poor Margaret passed a miserable evening, for Guy, really supposing she had taken his advice and retired, did not disturb her, and she finally, after her maid left her, sobbed herself to sleep.

CHAPTER III.

It was December when they settled down at Charteris, and the weeks passed till Christmas, rapidly, so occupied was Margaret in investigating the "ins and outs" of her new home; receiving and returning the visits of the neighboring gentry.

Besides that, she had her hands full of employment, in the fashioning of dainty garments, into whose every fold such hopes were nestling! She could not forego the pleasure of doing much of the work herself, and as she thought of the future her heart grew almost light in anticipation of the untold happiness that might soon be hers. Would not the baby open the father's heart to the mother?

Guy was most of the time with her, only occasionally running up to London on business. As the holy season drew near, she arranged to prepare a feast for the tenantry, and took great interest in it. Her principal coadjutors were Mrs. Halsted, the rector's wife, who lived in the beautiful rectory just beyond the park gates, and little Mrs. Bonnycastle, the young wife of the physician who lived in the village of Charteris, and attended to the physical health of the neighborhood.

The three ladies worked together for the people's

pleasure, and the result was a grand Christmas festival, equal to those of the olden time in that part of the country. Oxen roasted whole, and holly-boughs, and plum-pudding, and all the rest of it. After Christmas, the young widowed countess, Lady Julia Seton, paid her a visit. Then in February Parliament met, and Guy was obliged to go up to town to take his seat in the House of Peers. It was then that Margaret felt her loneliness, isolated from all society save the occasional visits of the rector's and the doctor's wives. It was then that she felt the pressing of her great sadness, till sometimes her heart seemed breaking.

She would wander about the house at times with such an aching soreness that she thought she could bear it no longer; at others she would pace her chamber floor, and hold out her arms and speak the name to herself that no one ever heard her utter, "Guy! Guy!" with desperate yearning. "If he did but love me!" was her heart-moan, "If he did but love me!" And not even the fond anticipations of mother-joy could still that cry, "If he did but love me!"

If he had but left some memento of Clare around,—her portrait,—anything,—so she could hold communion as it were with the dead wife, and form some imagination of her as she was! if he would only speak of her sometimes! Margaret was not of a jealous disposition, and had Guy opened his heart to her of his grief for Clare, he would have found a sweet consolation in her sympathy. His silence did not deceive her nor lead her to think he had forgotten her predecessor. If he had only told her all, instead of leaving her to learn full particulars from the kindly old housekeeper and Benson. And that locked-up room!—the Bluebeard chamber, as Margaret might have styled it had she put her thoughts into words. How

that weighed on her mind! She was becoming terribly morbid, and really dreaded being left alone much longer with only old Shott for her daily companion. At last she wrote to Charteris, requesting permission to invite her kind old friends, Dr. Schroeder and his wife, to pay her the visit they had promised when she left them. The doctor had determined he would give up practice in a year, and if he had kept his resolution, as, of course, he had, there would be nothing to prevent their accepting the invitation.

To this letter Guy replied immediately, telling her to write when she pleased,—that he had also written seconding her invitation. Then he suggested that he should send Dennis down to bring her up to the city, if she felt she could take the journey. He regretted that his duties prevented him from coming himself.

Margaret gladly wrote the letter, but declined the trip to London in her present state of health; and now the anticipation of a favorable answer to her invitation was something to look forward to. It came, almost sooner than she had expected, and informed her that her old friends were just about to sail for Europe, intending to visit Germany, when her letter reached them. They, of course, had intended looking in upon her on their return to New York, but if she wanted them then they would go to her at once.

Which they did; and in showing them the beauties of the neighborhood, and the delights of her lovely home, Margaret for a time forgot her sadness. But not for long; as the hour of her trial approached she grew almost frantic. Guy ran down for a few days at the Easter recess, but that was the only visit he paid.

Greatness was being thrust upon Guy; his ambition had never been aroused, he had hardly been conscious of

his own powers until forced to show them. A speech made most unexpectedly by him on one occasion had drawn the attention of the government to him, and he was selected to undertake a delicate mission to one of the Continental courts; the necessity was so great and urgent that he had no time to run down to Charteris to see Margaret, and he was absent from England two weeks.

His letters were full of his new interests; not that he wrote elatedly at the royal patronage,—he was too self-poised and self-respecting for that,—but he wrote as a man would who suddenly felt new powers stirred within him, at the same time that the opportunity for exercising them was opened.

Margaret, while she felt keenly the negligence of her claims, could not but have a certain proud satisfaction in the position he had achieved so suddenly. But kindly Mrs. Schroeder saw more than Margaret dreamed she did; she remembered, too, that conversation they had had when Margaret was hesitating to accept Guy's offer; and she began to fear maybe she and her husband had not done such a kindly thing by her after all, for she was too true a woman not to know that all the luxuriance of wealth, all the grandeur of the countess's coronet, could not make up to one like Margaret for love; and love, she began to fear, was wanting on Guy Charteris's part. She had been blind at first, but she was keen-eyed enough now; and without a word being spoken to her of complaint or repining she arrived at a pretty correct idea of the true state of the case. And this idea she communicated to her husband one evening, but the doctor pooh-poohed it with all a man's natural scorn of a woman's proneness to jump to a conclusion. "Margaret was fanciful; all women were at such times." "Well, if Margaret

had said nothing to her, she had the less right to form so erroneous an opinion."

And so the good man dismissed the thought, and started for his daily walk.

CHAPTER IV.

ONE night, sleep having refused to visit her pillow, Margaret rose, and throwing a dressing-gown around her, paced—as was her custom when wakeful or nervous—the floor for nearly an hour; then she lighted her candle, and opened a door on the further side of her room from Guy's apartment. Raising the light above her head, she glanced around; everything was ready; the cradle swung on its supports, hung round with dainty lace, the silken coverlet turned down, the little pillow fresh and soft. A rocking-chair was near, and on a table stood a baby's basket; its furnishing had been the work of kindly little Mrs. Bonnycastle, but the silken coverlet had been the present of the rector's wife. Margaret smiled as she stood for a moment looking down into the empty cradle, almost fancying she could see the little form she hoped was soon to occupy it; she passed her hand lovingly over the basket, and then turned to the bureau and opened the top drawer. There lay the little garments ready to her hand; how she had worked over them, fashioning each tiny piece with such careful finish. She knelt down and handled them one by one, and as she did so she thought of Clare, and the work she evidently had last been employed on (as the housekeeper had told her), and all the sweet hopes and happiness that had then been so cruelly blasted. And as

she thought of the lost wife, her mind naturally turned to the husband,—*her* husband *now*,—and bowing herself to the very ground, she wrung her hands together and moaned, "Oh, will he love me afterwards,—will he love me! Oh, Guy, Guy!"

How long she lay there she hardly knew, but when she rose she felt she must make one appeal, she must do something to bring about a change! She sat down to her writing-table and began a letter to Guy. The great clock on the stairs rang out the hour, yet Margaret's pen moved on; her head throbbed, but she was unconscious of its achings. With all the eloquence of her loving, sorrow-stirred heart she plead for what was her right and what she found was also her life.

"When you hold my baby—*our* baby—in your arms, will you refuse me a little of your love? Guy! Guy! I have never dared to call you by that name, save in my secret heart or in the solitude of my own room; but I must write it here. Guy, my darling, my love, my idol, I cannot live shut out from your heart! If I survive my hour of trial, will you not try to love me? Clare will not mind it,—could she speak to you, she would tell you so. On my knees, oh, my husband, I beg that precious boon!"

When she felt she could say no more, that language was exhausted, then, and not till then, did she become conscious of how physically exhausted she was also. She closed her blotting-book, and, leaving it in her open desk, crept back to bed shivering from head to foot.

It was well for Margaret that she had her old friends with her, for it taxed the united skill of both doctors to save her life and that of her baby, and afterwards she lay long hours unconscious, and when she awoke it was in the ravings of fever. Guy was telegraphed for and came instantly, letting his new public duties fall before this call.

When he stood at the bedside she did not know him; but his heart was wrung by her pitiful cry of "Guy! Guy!" and mutterings about "Clare—and that room"—"locked up—all locked up—and his heart, too—he never loved me!" Then "Guy! Guy! he can't hear me, so I can speak the precious name—Guy! But he won't come, he is too busy—state cares; he'll be a great man some day! oh, yes, I know—all—all about it—a great man, and my baby's father—did you say it was a boy?—a boy! oh, he'll be so proud—and then—maybe he'll love me—do you think he will?" She turned pleadingly to Mrs. Schroeder, who held her hand, while the tears ran down her face.

Guy stood at the foot of the bed and looked down at his wife with a face like marble, and with folded arms, but the hands were clinched until the nails drew blood from the palms. At last he turned to the doctor and said,—

"For God's sake give her something to make her sleep, or this will kill me!"

And Dr. Schroeder raised the poor head from the pillow and held the soothing draught to her lips. She drank it, but began to talk again, until gradually the medicine had its way and she grew calmer, and at last slept.

Guy never stirred until the poor eyes closed; he felt shocked beyond measure, and could not understand how the secret he had thought locked away so carefully in his own breast had been found out by her from whom he was most anxious to keep it! He examined his conduct carefully, and could not fix upon any point in which he had been remiss; the world knew him for a most devoted husband—in what had he failed? And as he looked down upon the sad, sweet face, an all-powerful pity surged up into his heart; the icy bonds were broken, and he knew

he loved her now; he grasped the doctor's hand—"Save her, Doctor Schroeder—save her; she *must* live, or life is nothing more to me!" Then motioning to Mrs. Schroeder to follow him, he left the room.

But when they were alone together, he did not speak—only grasped her hand and wrung it; then, seeing the deep sadness and pity in her eyes, he fell on his knees beside her, buried his face on her shoulder, and sobbed aloud.

She soothed him as if he had been a child, and then, as he grew calmer, they had a long talk and explanation, and at the end of it she remembered that Guy had not seen his son yet,—the little Viscount Rochdale, the heir of his house and hopes.

The baby was brought and placed in his father's arms, and, bowing his head over the tiny hands, he vowed to cherish the mother so tenderly that no pang of sorrow should ever cause her heart to beat unhappily again, if he could help it.

Margaret continued for several days to talk wildly and to cry for Guy. He was seldom from her bedside, but she never recognized him. One day while she was quiet under the influence of the medicine, Dr. Schroeder had occasion for a slip of paper. Guy had retired to his own room, and the doctor, seeing Margaret's blotting-boo in the desk, opened it, to find what he wanted. The letter was there just as she had finished it; without reading more than the two or three words at the beginning, which revealed to him the nature of the writing, he took up the book, carried it into the adjoining room, and laid it open where it would first greet her husband's eyes when he should awake.

When he read the letter, Guy's soul was moved to its very depths with pity, love, and admiration. He felt he had never known his wife before. How long he had

ignored the nobleness of the heart beating beside him! He had imagined that kindly courtesy and gentle consideration for all physical needs and comforts were all that he need bestow upon the woman he had made his wife out of a feeling of pity and gratitude—giving no thought to the needs of the soul he had also in his keeping—to the mental life which he was blasting every day.

At last the crisis came; the house was silent as the grave, the servants moved about on tip-toe and spoke in whispers; the baby slept, and the double doors of the nursery were closed to prevent its feeble cry, if it should cry, from reaching the sick-chamber. Mrs. Schroeder and Mrs. Halsted sat in the former lady's room with Mrs. Bonnycastle, not speaking, but inwardly praying that life might be spared; Drs. Schroeder and Bonnycastle sat, scarcely breathing, in Guy's dressing-room, with the door leading into Margaret's ajar; Guy himself knelt by the bedside and held her hand in his, his eyes fixed upon her face, while his heart rose, as it had never risen before, in prayer, begging for that precious life.

At last the fingers moved in his grasp, the head was turned slightly on the pillow, the large soft eyes opened upon the world once more with reason in their glance. They rested on her husband's face.

"Guy!" The feeble arms made a motion as if to raise themselves. He took them and laid them round his neck.

"Margaret! My pearl without price!" He bent his head and kissed her lips and eyes, and folded her in a close embrace. She needed no words then to tell her that her sorrows were over.

The two doctors closed the door gently, then by a common impulse turned and clasped each other's hands. When they sought their wives, their faces told the joyful tidings, albeit the eyes of both were moist.

CHAPTER V.

GREAT were the rejoicings over the birth of the heir, and Margaret often smiled as she glanced at the tiny mite they were making such a fuss about; smiled, for she could smile now, aye, laugh, too, such a rippling, joyous laugh as Guy had never heard from her lips before. And Guy was very proud of his baby, yet as he held it in his arms a yearning soreness would steal over his heart and dim his eye; the memory of his lost Guy, his first-born, was ever present to him.

Of course the baby must be named, and one evening they (for the Schroeders did not leave until Margaret's health was fully re-established) were discussing the important question. Of course the lost Guy could not be supplanted; his name was sacred. Charteris suggested Hermann Schroeder, at which the doctor clapped both hands over his ears. Then Mrs. Schroeder brought forward the claims of Margaret's father to be considered.

"It shall be Henry Thornton, of course, shall it not, Pearl?" said Guy, turning to Margaret, who was propped up with pillows upon a lounge.

A faint color rose to the pale cheek at the pet name, which came, in time, to be the one he always called her by, but Guy saw a faint, hesitating dissent on her face, and he went over and knelt at her side.

"Well," he asked, laying his hands on hers, "shall it be Henry Thornton?"

She drew him closer and whispered,—

"Call him Theodore, Guy, for he was a precious gift of God to me."

And the little Lord Rochdale, Theodore Hermann Charteris, had for his sponsors Dr. Bonnycastle and wife, Mrs. Halsted and the rector.

It was June when Margaret received her "gift of God," and as soon as she was able to travel they went up to Straithness for the hot months of July and August. Dr. and Mrs. Schroeder spent a week or two in Scotland, and then carried out their original plan of going over to Germany. But Margaret had no time to feel lonely or to miss them; the days seemed to pass in one unbroken course of enjoyment. The neighborhood was unusually gay, and she was constantly receiving or paying visits. Then, too, the advent of the young heir must be honored by a fête, at which his health was drank by gentle and simple. And Margaret was perfectly happy; no cloud dimmed the horizon of her future. Guy was as devoted and tender as any heart could wish, seeming never to care to be away from her side. Happiness is a great beautifier, and Margaret showed its effects on her recovery. She had always been called a "sweet-looking girl," without any peculiar claims to beauty; her features were not regular nor striking, but the sadness of her dark eyes—a look they had long worn—and the white, even teeth redeemed her face from homeliness. Now she bloomed out into a stately style that no one had anticipated. She was in the full maturity of her years, and what she had lost of the freshness of youth, heart-felt happiness more than supplied. Guy had no reason to fear that she would not hold her own with England's fairest daughters.

CHAPTER VI.

Guy was too happy to remember old scores against Sir Gilbert Forrester; he reasoned to himself that the man was not to blame in claiming what he thought was rightly his own, although he had been very much in a hurry to do so, and had behaved in an ungentlemanly manner under his disappointment. Therefore Sir Gilbert and his little girl were among the few guests invited to make a visit to Straithness.

This invitation was a great relief to Forrester, who had been most anxious to be on friendly terms with Clare's husband; but he did not make a favorable impression upon Margaret, who, however, felt a great interest in little Rose, and soon learned to love the three-year-old girl very fondly. But Gilbert she could not like, and told Guy so.

"Poor Forrester is unfortunate with some women, though they say his wife loved him devotedly," replied Guy.

"She may have done so at first, Guy, while he was acting a part for his own purposes, but I feel confident she did not when she learned to know him as a woman must know her husband. She was an heiress, was she not?"

"Yes; but her father still lives. Little Rose will be one of the richest young ladies in the three kingdoms, if not the richest."

"Then I hope either her grandfather will live till she is married, or else fix things so that her father can have no control over her fortune!" exclaimed Margaret.

"The old general is pretty 'cute, as we used to say in Yankeedom, and has, as they say farther West, cut his wisdom-teeth. But what has induced you to take such an aversion to the poor man, Pearl?"

"I can't give you a reason, dear, that would seem satisfactory to your masculine mind; but I can't abide him. I shudder whenever he comes near the baby, and I sicken when I see the peculiar expression his face wears when he sees you caressing me or the boy."

"You are fanciful, Margo, still it is a strange coincidence. Do you know that Clare had the same feelings towards him? and that very last evening—the last I—you know, dear—she expressed herself in even stronger terms than you have done."

"Trust a woman's instinct, dearest; it is sometimes far truer than all your boasted reasonings," said Margaret. "That Clare had the same aversion, and he her blood relation, shows that there *is* something. He is no friend of yours, and some day, perhaps, you will find it out."

"I can't see now how he can injure me, Pearl, so I fear you will prove a false prophet, as you are rather an oracular one with your 'instincts' and 'perhaps.'"

"Nous verrons, mon ami," replied Margaret; "but a truce to a disagreeable subject. God grant he may not!"

Forrester felt that Margaret distrusted him, and he did not force himself upon her; but he was glad to see her fondness for little Rose, and a project formed in his mind rather prematurely, still it was one he would gladly carry out if he lived long enough. Why should not Rose and Theodore marry? Nearly two years' seniority on the girl's part was not so very much, and if Guy should turn up inconveniently at some future time he could be easily put aside as an impostor. The more he thought of it, the more feasible the project seemed, though he did not dare

to propose it to Charteris. He asked one day, in a careless manner, how his old place was looking, and the earl began to find fault with him for letting so fine a property go to the dogs. Forrester acknowledged the shame of it, and said he had serious thoughts of making a great change down there; he would go down in September and look around. An invitation to the Manor followed, as a matter of course, much to Margaret's chagrin when she heard of it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE next three years passed in peaceful happiness, unmarked by any event worthy of note. "Rochdale" grew and prospered, and came through all the ills of babyhood triumphantly. Little Rose spent her time between Stoke-Leighton and Charteris Manor, with an occasional visit to Brandon Towers.

George Robson, had he been suddenly transported to Brandon, would not have known the place, it was so altered. The wall, that had done such good service as a shield for the deep villainy perpetrated within its shadow, was gone; the trees had been thinned out artistically; the old moat entirely filled up and leveled over; walks and carriage-drives threaded their ways through the park down to the river, where a graceful bridge connected Brandon with Charteris; the house had been thoroughly renovated and improved, yet the old walls bore marks of their years upon their rugged sides; additions, too, had been made to the house, but all in keeping with the original, of hewn stone. The-elm tree that had stood by the gate in the wall was left untouched, whether by accident or design no one but Gilbert Forrester knew.

But when it was all done, and there was nothing to add or improve, Gilbert could not bring himself to stay there long at a time. He would come down for a flying visit two or three times a year, and bring Rose with him; but it always ended in his consigning his daughter to Margaret's care, and returning to London until it was time for the child to pay one of her regular visits to her grandfather.

When Rose was nearly five and Rochdale three, the old general, Rose's grandfather, died. He proved himself as ''cute' as Charteris had suggested he might, in the disposal of his property; while Rose inherited the bulk of it, Forrester could touch nothing but his annuity. He and Charteris were named guardians and executors. A month after her grandfather's death another turn of fortune's wheel brought more of this world's goods to little Rose. The general was only about sixty years of age when he died; over in Ireland he had an uncle, an old man of lmost ninety years, whose death he had been expecting a long time, but who survived him nearly thirty days. This old man was Baron Worthington, a title which, descending in the female line, now fell to Rose, together with an impoverished estate and a meagre rent-roll. But these were evils that she could not feel, and Charteris, after going over to inspect the barony, determined to devote his attention to the recovery of a naturally fine property and the relief of the poverty-stricken tenants.

The winter after Rose became *Lady Worthington* Charteris determined to spend in Italy, and Forrester begged Margaret to take his little girl with them. To this she gladly assented. Their route was the usual route of tourists: Nice, Geneva, Florence, Rome, Naples—then to Rome again, thence to Milan and Venice.

One day, in Venice, they were about to step into their

gondola at the Piazza di San Marco, when another boat shot by them to an adjoining *riva* and stopped. The occupants besides the boatmen (it was not a gondola) were a monk in the dress of his order and a young lad. The youth was dressed in the picturesque garb of the Dalmatian peasantry, but there was that in his air and bearing that showed he was not of them. He and his companion alighted, and the monk turned to him, saying a few words, then hurried across the piazzetta towards the Merceria. The lad threw himself at the base of the column of St. Theodore, and, drawing a flute from his pocket, put it together and began to play. A movement among our party drew his attention to them, and, looking up with a pair of large blue eyes, he met the gaze of Guy Charteris bent upon him.

Charteris started and passed his hand over his brow; when he looked again the lad had risen and was standing bareheaded before him.

"Oh, play something, please!" exclaimed Rose, in childish delight; and Margaret laughingly turned to ask her if she supposed the young man could understand her, when she was startled by seeing him fling himself at Rose's feet and seize her hand to cover it with kisses. "English!" he exclaimed, "you are English—you speak the dear language that I have not heard from any lips but my own for five long years!"

"Are you English, my boy?" asked Charteris; while Margaret gazed fixedly in his face, and asked herself where had she seen one resembling it, before?

"Ah, si, signore—yes, sir—but I was very young when my uncle brought me away from England—and my mother died in Rome—and then—then—my uncle, her brother, went back to England, leaving me with Father Anselmo, and never came back."

"Is he dead?" asked Guy.

"Indeed, signore, I know not; I have lived at the monastery with the kind monks for five years since he left, but no word has ever come from him."

"Your name is——?"

"Conway, signore—oh—do you know my uncle—George?"

Charteris smiled at the simplicity of the question, and the boy himself saw how senseless it was.

"Ah, no—that is not possible; he was always Uncle George to me; I knew no other name."

"How old were you when he left you?"

"Twelve, signore."

"And that was five years ago?"

"Si, signore, é cinqui anni—it is five years."

"My poor boy! I wish I could help you; but I see no way to do so," replied Charteris. "I have no clue to work upon."

"Would it not be well to see the monk he speaks of?" asked Margaret, turning to her husband.

"Ah, it is too late—he will not return till evening; I am to meet him here at six o'clock," replied the youth.

"You speak English very well, Conway," said Margaret; "is Conway your given name or that of your family?"

"My uncle taught me, signora; Conway is my family name, the fathers call me Giulio."

"Giulio Conway; and your uncle's name——?"

But the lad shook his head.

"Only Uncle George,—only George,—no more."

"We must not lose all knowledge of you, Guy," said Charteris, taking out a note-book. "Write to me to this address, and if you ever find any clue that I can work up for you I will only too gladly do it."

"Veramente! Quanto sono felice! Ah, grazie! grazie!" exclaimed the lad, raising the hand Charteris held out to him to his lips.

Margaret, too, gave him her hand and a bright, sweet smile; but little Rose held up her ruby mouth to kiss him with all childish innocence. He raised her in his arms and kissed her, then, as he put her down, she shyly pressed a little bunch of violets she had held into his hands. He kissed the flowers, then hid them away in his jacket.

The English party returned to their gondola, and as the light craft shot up into the grand canal, Margaret looked back at the spot where they had left the lad, and saw that he had thrown himself at the foot of the column again and covered his face with his jacket.

When Guy Charteris had last looked in the face of his oldest born it had been to kiss the childish lips a blithe "good-night" near thirteen years ago, and this was how they met again. He was very quiet as they were rowed up to their hotel, and Margaret, understanding his mood, slipped her hand into his in silent sympathy. If he had but guessed the truth!

BOOK FOURTH.

CHAPTER I.

As Robson had left him, Guy remained with the kind monks. At first he used to watch eagerly for a letter or some tidings from his uncle, but gradually grew reconciled to his new life.

Robson's disappearance remained a mystery to all at the monastery, and Father Anselmo could not refrain from a fear that it was an intentional desertion of the boy, particularly when, the next quarterly payment of Guy's allowance being due, there was no money forthcoming, nor was there ever any more. This, however, did not influence the father in his treatment of Guy, and the young life was made as bright as possible. But his naturally dreamy, meditative disposition was fostered by the quiet life he led up there among the Dinaric Alps, nor did the journeys he made several times with the padre to Trieste, and even to Venice, do much to dispel it. The old dilapidated town of Trieste, with its Jews and dirt, nor the dreamy floating in the Venetian gondola, were not changes calculated to awaken very enlivening thoughts in the boy's mind. Not that Guy grew morbid or unhappy, but he began at an early age to have serious ideas, and often by expressing them to his friends, Father Anselmo or the organist, startled them by their strangeness or the

maturity of thought they displayed; while he could be merry and light-hearted, gay and frolicsome as any child at other times.

Venice was his paradise, and he never lost an opportunity of visiting it; spending the time occupied by whoever accompanied him in transacting the business of his errand, in some one of the churches or palaces, or on the Piazza di San Marco. The peculiar Oriental architecture of the cathedral had a strange fascination for him, as well as the balcony of the Ducal Palace, where he could gaze out over the open water and lose himself in reverie.

It was on one of these visits, when Guy was about seventeen years old, that the meeting between himself and his father, which we have already described, took place. It had a great effect upon him, seeming to rouse him into a desire to learn something about himself and his native land. The organist had been his companion that day, and as soon as they started to return to Trieste he told him of the interview. The monk saw in it the finger of God, and so also did Father Anselmo when he was told. Guy showed him the address which Charteris had given him, which was to his club in London; but as he had made no mention of when he would return, the monk thought it would be better to wait until after the New Year before he wrote, as his English friend would then be more likely to be at home, and then he, too, would write. But Father Anselmo could throw little light upon the matter, for Robson had told him very little, and the sealed packet confided to his care was not to be delivered to Guy until he had attained his twenty-first year.

It was in May that Guy—as we will still call him, though he had forgotten that name, and answered to the new one, Giulio, altogether—and his father had met, and the eight

or nine months which Father Anselmo advised him to wait seemed an age. He grew very restless, and could take little or no interest in his old occupations. His kind friend saw this with regret, although he acknowledged that it was but natural. He finally, in midsummer, wrote to the address given to Guy a long letter, with a full account of all he knew about his ward. He told his unknown correspondent that he was most anxious for the boy's future, as he could not lead his present life much longer; not that he was weary of the charge or wished to be rid of it,—the boy was dear to them all, and all felt the greatest interest in his well-being. But Guy would soon be a man, and while the little capital which had been accumulated for him was sufficient to keep him in comfort, he knew enough of the world and of Guy to feel sure that an objectless life would be bad for him and never satisfy his nature. He then suggested that Charteris should, if he really was interested in the matter, find some employment for the boy and constitute himself his guardian in England, which he was most anxious to visit.

This letter followed Charteris about and reached him at last at Paris in November, their return to England having been fixed for the week before Christmas.

Father Anselmo also gave the earl an account of the course of study Guy had gone through, showing him that while he was as ignorant of the world and the world's ways as a child, he was well versed in books and all that books could teach him.

To this letter Charteris wrote an immediate answer, acknowledging the wisdom of the father's plan, and telling him how and where Guy would find him—that if he joined him in Paris, he would care for him and take him to England with him.

But before the answer reached the monastery, before

even the father's letter had reached Charteris, an event occurred that changed poor Guy's plans completely.

One evening in September, while Father Anselmo, the organist, and their charge were seated upon the trunk of a fallen tree just outside the monastery walls, watching the glories of the sunset, and discussing the probabilities of some very great good fortune arising for Guy out of the interest the Earl of Straithness seemed to have taken in him, a weary-looking figure was seen to slowly climb the hill. The three paused in their talk and watched its approach, when suddenly Guy sprang up, and, exclaiming, "Uncle George! Uncle George!" ran forward to meet him.

CHAPTER II.

It was indeed George Robson, come back as it were from the grave. Eagerly they plied him with questions, but they soon found that his mind was too confused to answer them. His desires seemed to be to escape some pursuing foe, and to reassure himself that Guy was near him and safe.

He was very much fatigued by his journey, and it was several days before he recovered; but even then his friends could see that whatever he had endured of mental or physical suffering had nearly wrecked him, mind and body.

By dint of judicious questioning, Father Anselmo at length elicited from poor Robson the history of the last six years. It was not told easily, nor at one time, and the remembrance of what he had suffered, shut out from all

communication with the world and sickening with dread of what might happen to Guy, affected him strongly. It was not until several weeks after his return, and at a time when he seemed calm and collected, that Father Anselmo mentioned the new friend that seemed raised up for Guy, and told him of the letter he had written. The effect of this intelligence was very different from what the monk had expected; instead of being pleased, Robson showed very great alarm and uneasiness. "The Earl of Straithness," he repeated to himself, over and over again; "the Earl of Straithness!"

"Did you say he was coming here?" he asked.

"No," replied the monk; "I proposed sending Giulio to him."

"Sending Giulio to him! Oh, no—no—that *must* not be!"

"But did you not tell me that Giulio had rich relations in England,—people of standing, too,—and can you not see yourself that he is no longer a child—older in fact than his years? It is time his future was provided for—that he was preparing himself for a profession—or——"

"Not while I live! oh, not while I live—I can't part from him; and he is not poor!"

Father Anselmo found he could not reason any more with Robson, and that nothing could disabuse him of the idea that Guy needed nothing more than what he could give him. He ceased all attempts at combating the poor, broken man's selfishness; and spoke to Guy on the subject, telling him to be patient and God would reward him in the end.

Poor Guy! it was a bitter disappointment, but he bore it quietly, saying not one word to Robson. It was one of the peculiarities of the latter's sadly-shattered mental state that, a feeling of alarm once communicated, it was

difficult, almost impossible to overcome it, while all memory of the cause was lost.

That night he told Guy they must fly for their lives—that a danger was pursuing them from which nothing but flight would save them; that the monks were all leagued against them, and that if their intended flight was discovered, all would be over. To save themselves, they must go that night. Guy tried his best to disabuse his uncle of this idea, and to assure him that the monastery was the safest place he could hide in—Father Anselmo his best friend. But all in vain: fly they must—and fly to-night. Finding that contradiction made him frantic, Guy desisted, and sought Father Anselmo, to ask his advice in the emergency.

The monk felt there was nothing to be done but to yield to the half-crazy fancy, or else the poor, shattered mind might sink into positive lunacy. He told Guy to humor his uncle in everything he could, and gave him two habits in which they might pretend to disguise themselves. He also gave him letters to a monastery of the order in Marburg, in Austria, advising him to get his uncle there or in the neighborhood, and as there was constant communication between the monasteries, they could correspond with each other without difficulty. He then took an affectionate leave of his foster son, and blessed him.

Guy sought his uncle and told him he had prepared everything for their flight, and had thought if they wore those habits they would more likely get along unchallenged. Accordingly at midnight they passed silently out at a side door (all the doors were unlocked night and day), fearing to open the heavy front door, as in closing it some sound might be made, and Robson thought Guy was entirely too careless of noise; what would become of

them if the monks heard them? When they were at length outside the walls, Guy turned and took a last look at the home, which had sheltered him for so many years, with a sigh of deep sadness.

They pursued their tiresome journey steadily; fortunately it was summer still in those southern latitudes, and they did not suffer from hunger. Father Anselmo had given Guy a sufficient sum on leaving the monastery (since Robson's disappearance, so many years before, Guy's little income had never been touched, and it had swelled into a nice sum), and promised more when they should reach Marburg.

Guy found his uncle had no plan, beyond getting away from the monks, and did not seem to know or care where they roamed so it was not westward and was among the mountains.

After weeks of wanderings, not so unpleasant, among the magnificence of the mountain scenery, Guy at length found himself in the neighborhood to which he had been directed. He was puzzled now to know what to do,—how to leave his uncle while he went into the city to present the letters and get news of his friends. He had led Robson out of the regular path or road, intending to reach a point on the mountain from which he could take a survey of the neighborhood, spy out the land, as it were, and form a rough guess of the shortest way to reach the city, which some peasants whom he had asked told him was five or six miles by the road, but only two if he got over the hills and meadows. They climbed and climbed, and at length reached a small level space, where they paused to take breath and look around them. The panorama spread out before their eyes was magnificent in the grandeur of the mountains, and beautiful in the beauty of the fields and meadows lying in between, while far off,

up the valley, loomed a dome and some spires, which told the wanderers where Marburg lay. Robson soon grew restless, and roamed around the little plateau. Presently he made an exclamation, and began pulling at some bushes which grew close up to the mountain side. Guy went to his assistance and to see what had excited him so. It was the opening into what seemed a cave, and which proved to be a large one, perfectly dry, and so high that, once past the entrance, which caused them to stoop slightly, Guy, who was quite tall, could stand upright in it. The cave was so near the end of the plateau that on one side of the entrance there was a sheer wall of rock nearly fifty feet down to where a mountain torrent rushed over its uneven bed. A false step, hastily made, and there was no salvation.

"This is the place, Giulio; we can hide here! No one would ever find us here!" exclaimed Robson. And indeed it was the truth, for they had not followed any path in climbing to this height, only taken advantage of the least steep places.

Guy answered gently, "Would you indeed like to make this our home?"

"Yes! yes! Oh, Giulio, don't go any farther; let us stay here!" Robson plead like a child.

"Just as you wish, Uncle George; it doesn't matter to me," replied Guy, "only," and he led him out on the plateau again, and pointed to the city, "there lies Marburg, the nearest town. You must consent to my going there and laying in a stock of necessaries; we cannot live on air, or, if we have food, without means of cooking it."

"Of course we can't, Giulio."

"Then you are willing I shall leave you, for a whole day perhaps?"

Robson paused a moment, looking closely into Guy's face.

"You'll come back?" he asked. "You'll come back?"

"Of course I will, uncle; of course I will," replied Guy.

"Yes, of course, I know you will; and you won't mention my name to any one, nor let any one see me?" Robson added, laying his hand on Guy's arm and looking up at him, for the youth had outgrown his companion.

Guy looked at the long white beard and the cowl-shaded face, and thought no one would know him; that even if his dearest friend were to see him now, he would pass him by without a thought.

"No, you shall be perfectly safe; trust me for that," replied Guy, and Robson was satisfied.

They made themselves as comfortable as possible for the night, with their knapsacks for pillows and the monks' garments for blankets. The next day Guy repaired to Marburg, found the monastery, and delivered Father Anselmo's letter. They were expecting him, having heard from the father through the usual post. Nothing could have been kinder than was his reception, and Father Bernard, to whom he was particularly recommended, assured him of his interest in him and in all that concerned him.

By degrees Guy accumulated many comforts around Robson in his retreat; but he had to work very hard, for he could have no help. He could ask no one to come to their cave, and sometimes he felt very lonely and hopeless.

CHAPTER III.

THE answer which Guy Charteris had written to Father Anselmo's letter reached its destination in due time, and the monk wrote immediately, telling him of the arrival of the boy's uncle, of the cause of his detention all these years, of the state of mind in which he was; how completely shattered his mental faculties were, and how the mention of his correspondent's name had aroused him to a state of terror which nothing could overcome; how he had fled with Guy—and of the direction they had taken; and that he still kept up a correspondence with the boy.

Charteris replied that he could not understand the uncle's terror at the mention of his name, as he, himself, had no knowledge of such a person; he regretted the sad circumstances, and would always be ready to do what he could for the young man, and requested the monk to give him, occasionally, tidings of him.

In December the earl and his family returned to Charteris, and Forrester came down to the Towers to meet them and receive his little Rose again from her temporary guardians. The child's joy at seeing her father was very great, for she loved him dearly; but she was always happy at Charteris, and Guy and Margaret had begun to love her like a daughter of their own.

The winter passed pleasantly, there being only a select and intimate party of visitors at the Manor. In February, when Parliament met, Charteris went up to London, and, for the first time since the late earl's death, Rochdale House—the town residence—was thrown open.

As soon as it was in readiness for her, Margaret came

up to take possession. She was to be presented at court this season, and there was some talk of Charteris being made member of the Privy Council. Soon after Parliament met he had made another telling speech in favor of some object the Government had very much at heart, which did much towards the success of it. Altogether the world was looking very bright and fair to Margaret just then. Her little Theodore was growing into a lovely, manly child; her husband was as tender and devoted as her heart could wish, and all the pleasures and enjoyments of that world lay spread out for her delight. She was very happy, and very grateful, and her heart yearned in motherly tenderness over little Rose, although she still shrank from Forrester with unmitigated aversion.

He also was in London for the season, and one evening, in conversation with him, Charteris was recalling some of their traveling experiences, and related the meeting of a young lad in Venice in whom he felt an unaccountable interest. Margaret happened to look at Forrester while Guy was speaking, and noticed that his face was ashy pale, and wore a scared look. But he governed himself with an effort, and asked if that was the last Guy had heard of the boy. The earl then continued to tell him of the letters that had passed between him and the monastery, and of the uncle's return, alarm, and flight at the mention of his name.

Forrester started at the mention of Robson's name, and muttered an oath, then composed himself to listen to Charteris's account.

"A most unaccountable thing," he continued, "for I have no idea who he can be. I remember long ago, when I was quite a young man, being introduced by Derwentwater, of the —th Hussars, to a Surgeon Robson, and hearing afterwards that he had been dismissed the service; if

it is he, he must have a good memory and a very morbid dread of meeting any one connected in the least with his past life."

Forrester had listened silently, and had been told enough to understand it all. He knew his cue at once, and he answered, "It is indeed the same; but his dread of you, Guy, was not so much a personal feeling as the fear that, through you, *I* should hear of his whereabouts. He is a deep-dyed villain, and that nephew of his—his sister's natural child—was fortunate to escape from his guardianship for so long a time, else he would have made him as bad as himself. We have an old score to settle,—something that happened out in India,—and it is fear of me that keeps him on the Continent. He dare not return to England."

Margaret looked at him as he spoke, and knew he was lying, though why, she could not guess. Nor did a glimpse of the truth come to her. She had, after meeting Guy, wondered who he reminded her of; and after her return to Charteris, as she gazed at Clare's portrait hanging over the mantel in her own sitting-room (the Bluebeard chamber had been unlocked, its contents scattered, and the room was Margaret's, as it had been Clare's, own peculiar sanctum), she had been puzzled by a resemblance to some one, she could not think who, and after one or two unavailing attempts to remember, troubled herself no more.

"But he did come back to England, it seems," replied Guy, "and was immured by some enemy in a private lunatic asylum."

"That is a fiction of his imagination, I rather think," said Forrester, coolly; "he may have started for England, been taken ill, been detained in a hospital, and imagined the rest. I know him too well—he is an arrant coward, and will keep away from England while I live."

"Are you so implacable?" laughed Guy.

"No," replied Forrester; "I would not hurt him were he here before me; he may live in England if he wishes it, for all I care—but you could not convince him of his safety, nor bring him over—poor fool!"

And Margaret pondered over it all silently.

CHAPTER IV.

THE winter passed drearily to Guy up there in his mountain cave, with only his flute and violin for amusement, and the companionship of his half-crazy uncle, his dog, and his deer. He had always been fond of making pets of dumb animals, and now he had two,—both rescued from death by his means. One, a dog of the hound species, which, a pup of two months, had been injured by some means in the leg, and doomed to death as good for nothing. Guy happened to pass at the time preparations were being made for the execution, and bought the poor little trembling thing. The other was a fawn, which he found beside its dead mother, and took under his protection. The two animals, although by nature antagonistic, got on very well, grew up together, and seemed to agree in every particular.

Robson was perfectly satisfied, and his nervousness greatly lessened by these months of entire rest and freedom from intercourse with his kind. He grew thinner and weaker week by week, and seemed, as the days passed, more and more unwilling that Guy should leave him for any length of time.

Meanwhile the mutterings of the coming storm grew

louder, and presently the war-cloud broke over the Eastern waters, and the flower of English and French youth hurried to the Black Sea, to win their spurs or lose their lives for the honor of their mother-land. Only faint rumors reached Guy in his retirement, but they were enough to make him very restive under the life he was forced to live. All the world was busy and up and doing, ready to seize the offered opportunities. Only he, it seemed, was forced to waste the best years of his life inactive. However, it was only at times that he indulged in these repining thoughts; he forced himself to be bright and cheerful before his uncle, and occupied himself in the study of the Sclavonic language and in the care of his dumb protégés. He was already able to speak fluently in French, German, and Italian, was a good Latin scholar, and, with these foundations, found it no difficult task to acquire others.

Affairs meantime went smoothly on in England, so far as our dramatis personæ are concerned, to all outward seeming at least. For the intelligence that Robson had reappeared startled Forrester out of his fancied security, and made him nervous and anxious. He visited the lunatic asylum, and found that there was no fault to be discovered, no connivance had been practiced by the managers; the escape had been purely accidental, and the physician in charge had written to him apprising him of the fact,—a letter which had evidently miscarried.

What would Robson do with his liberty was the next question; in what condition was he physically and mentally; was he likely to live long, or was the restless and unhappy mind at length wearing out the body?

"Damn the fool!" Forrester exclaimed one day, after pondering the situation for an hour or two; "damn the fool, I say! But I am almost as great a one to sit

here and wonder, when I can go and see for myself; and I will!"

This resolution, hastily formed, he determined to carry out at once, so little Rose and her governess were relegated once more to the care of Lady Straithness, while her father started to pay a visit, he said, to the seat of war. It was what many were doing through curious or charitable motives, therefore his intention created no surprise.

He told his friends that he meant to visit Paris and Rome, then go to Malta, and await a vessel to take him to the allied fleet. But his stay in those cities was very brief. With all possible dispatch he made his way to Spalatro; thence he had no difficulty in finding a guide to the monastery.

Not knowing what Robson had told his friends the monks of his history, and fearing, if he used his own name, to be prevented from seeing him, and knowing that the Earl of Straithness would be looked upon as a friend of Guy's, he determined, with a cool impudence all his own, to use the latter's name in order to obtain his object. He had arranged a charming little romance,—the discovery of Guy's parentage, etc.,—with which to further gull the monks.

Arriving at the monastery, he asked for Father Anselmo, and sent in a card bearing the crest and title of the Earl of Straithness!

Father Anselmo received him as Guy's strange friend, and readily told him all he knew. Forrester acted his part well, and the monk was thoroughly deceived. His visit was not long, as he expressed himself most anxious to reach the boy, he having discovered who his friends were, and how he had been stolen from them, and he was eager to return him to a mother's waiting arms.

Father Anselmo gave him a letter to Father Bernard at the Marburg monastery, and told him in that way he would more readily meet Guy.

At Spalatro Forrester had written to Charteris, and told him that finding himself so near he had concluded to visit the monastery, and discover for himself some particulars of Robson's late years; and that, as doubtless he had been represented as the poor man's arch-enemy, he would take the liberty of appropriating his title for the nonce, in order to obtain better information.

The earl laughed at the cool impudence of the proposal, but Margaret was very indignant. However, the thing was done before they had heard of it, and so could not be prevented.

CHAPTER V.

FORRESTER reached Marburg safely, and easily discovered the monastery, where he presented himself, and was told that as Guy had been there only the day before, it would be some time before he would repeat the visit. They could direct him to the cave, but, if he were not pressed for time, it would be better to wait, as the uncle was in such a state that the sudden presence of a stranger might have the worst effect.

So the baronet was forced to possess his soul in patience, and wait until Guy again visited the monastery. He spent his time wandering about the quaint old city, and, as he grew familiar with the place, in occasional strolls around the country. In one of these he narrowly missed meeting Guy, who, followed by his two pets, had been

wandering about, and had sat down to rest upon the very stone Forrester was glad to reach a few moments afterwards. Had he known it, he was but a few hundred yards from the object of his search, and had he not been fatigued by an unusually long walk, but had kept on up the path he had climbed thus far, he would have reached the cave. But the end was not yet; a few more days were to be added unto him, and then!

Word came at last from the monastery that Guy was there, and Forrester hastened to meet him. Guy had been told that his Venetian friend had sought him out, and been waiting for him for so long. Great was the boy's delight at the prospect of the meeting, and proportionately great was his disappointment when brought face to face with a perfect stranger.

Forrester had not thought of anything unpleasant to himself in the anticipated interview. His conscience troubled him little now about the abduction of his cousin and her son. Guy Charteris had gotten over his grief, and seemed happier even than he was in those old days. The question of the legitimacy of his marriage would never be raised by him, Forrester, and so long as Robson was kept out of the way who else could raise it? No, he never allowed the recollection of the past to trouble him now. This seeking after Robson was only a sort of morbid curiosity to see how his old ally and tool had borne the last six years, and—to make assurance doubly sure—to be satisfied as to his mental state, and the danger to be anticipated of discovery through him. Therefore he was not prepared for the faintness that overcame him, and the mist that passed before his eyes when Guy stood before him, and, tossing his hair back with a gesture so like his father, looked at him with Clare's own blue orbs. He was himself again in an instant, only a little trembling

in his limbs and want of readiness of speech made him appear for the first time in his life awkward.

"There is some mistake. I don't understand——" began Guy.

"No, my dear boy; but I will explain it. I am not—not the one—not the Earl of Straithness, but I come from him, and by his authority."

"And your name?" asked Guy.

"I am Sir Gilbert Forrester, the cousin-german of the first wife of the earl, and consequently an intimate friend. As soon as he heard of my intention of traveling eastward he requested me to see you, and if necessary to use his name, to obtain an interview." Forrester had now recovered himself, and his tongue ran glibly enough. "A letter from the good father at the monastery had informed him of your uncle's return, of his singular state of mind, and of his flight from the monastery. The earl has felt a great interest in you, is your sincere friend, and willing to do everything in his power for your advancement, and wishes me to see this strange recluse uncle, in order, if possible, to overcome his remarkable dread of mixing with the world, the better to forward your interests."

"You and he are very kind," replied Guy, "and I shall be ever grateful to you; but I cannot leave my uncle during his life, nor can you see him: he will see no one. I dare not even employ a peasant about him."

"Strange, strange; but, Giulio, I am an old friend of your uncle's. If I could only see him, speak a few words to him, all this morbid dread would disappear. Have you never heard him mention my name?"

"Never," replied Guy, looking full at him.

"Very, very strange," said Forrester musingly.

"Yes, it is strange; my life has been a strange one ever since I can remember; but I am perfectly satisfied that I

could never obtain my uncle's consent to an interview; the very mention of your desire for it would unsettle him again."

"But why mention it? Why not take me out to your hermitage unannounced, and let me win my own way?"

"He would say I was joined with his enemies; you do not, cannot, understand his state."

"Yes, I can; and I know he would say nothing of the kind. As soon as he saw me he would be only too glad."

Guy mused awhile, and Forrester left him to his thoughts, seeing that he was more than inclined to yield. At length he looked up.

"Well, be it so," he replied; "I have no key to the mystery of my uncle's life. I may be doing right,—perhaps wrong,—God knows; I leave it in His hands."

"And in whose better could you leave it?" asked Forrester, in a tone of voice whose solemnity was belied by his eyes, which fairly sparkled with satisfaction at his triumph. "And the sooner we start the better," he added, seeing Guy still sat lost in reverie.

"Yes!" he exclaimed, rousing himself. "Yes, let us go at once! I must say good-by to Father Bernard, and will rejoin you."

"How do you propose to reach your cave?" asked the baronet, as they left the monastery.

"I always walk," replied Guy.

"But I cannot walk that distance, my young friend; you must come with me to my hotel, and we will find some kind of conveyance. You forget, I am not young like you."

"As you please," was Guy's answer; "only, as our hermitage is very much out of the way of all travel, a carriage will not be of much use after we reach the foot of the mountain."

"Oh, then we can walk. I am not entirely helpless, though I cannot do as I once could."

As they took their places in the open wagon they had secured to take them as far as possible up the mountain, Forrester called his valet and gave him a whispered order. The man returned to the hotel, and on his reappearance mounted the drag beside the driver. Guy saw this addition to their company with regret and wonder and alarm, when, the man's coat blowing aside, he discovered he had a pistol in his breast-pocket. But it was too late, and, indeed, he could not in courtesy object to the arrangement, so he suffered it in silence.

An hour and a half's drive brought them to the highest point their conveyance could be drawn; thence the road dwindled to a mere cow-path, and they were forced to alight and pursue the rest of the way on foot. But that short time spent in the wagon had been enjoyed by Guy more than anything he could remember for a long period. The road was good, the day a lovely one,—cool enough to make a plaid not uncomfortable, but by no means cold,—and Forrester had never been so entertaining. Whether it was the reaction from the shock of seeing Guy, the relief of finding that his secret had been kept by Robson, and that Guy had no suspicion of what trouble he owed him, or whether it was the brilliancy of mind which we often see in those over whom the death-shadow is lowering, we cannot say; suffice it that, had his intention been to fascinate the boy and to bring him into his toils, as the snake is said to do the bird, Forrester could not have succeeded better.

As they drew near the end of their walk, Guy laid his hand upon his companion's arm and paused in his walk. Forrester looked inquiringly at him, and followed with his eyes the gesture he silently made to draw his attention

to the panorama laid out before him. It was indeed superb,—mountains piled on mountains, and green valleys nestling between, here and there dotted with cattle grazing, or the cottages of the peasantry; while over all there hung the purple mist, and the trees showed the first faint touch of Autumn's fingering. Far off in the distance the towers and turrets of Marburg rose against the sky. Forrester took in the scene earnestly, and drew a long breath as he turned again to follow Guy. The rest of the walk was in silence, and in a few moments they had reached their destination.

At first they saw no one,—the path touched the plateau at the farthest end from the cave, and the baronet paused again to drink in the beauty of earth and heaven, and then turned his attention to his immediate surroundings. A fold of white flannel projecting from the mouth of the cave showed him the whereabouts of him he sought. It was, indeed, Robson's accustomed seat, and where he spent much of his time, listlessly gazing up and down the valley. Guy moved to go to him; but Forrester, laying one finger on his lip, with the other hand pressed him back and advanced alone, cautiously but firmly, until he was directly opposite the entrance. Then as he saw the figure clothed in the white flannel robe, its hands clasped listlessly in its lap, he did not speak, but stood looking at it. He moved again, and Guy saw with dread that he was standing very near the edge; he had turned, too, so that the lad could see his face, and the diabolical sneer upon it frightened him. He made a step forward, and just then Robson raised his head.

One glance, and he stood up and pushed his cowl back with both hands and gazed again, and Guy was alarmed by the expression of his face, but stood still fascinated, drawing his breath in short, quick respirations. He felt

like one who, in a dream, witnesses some important event occurring of vital consequence to the dreamer, but unable to move hand or foot to further or retard it. The men stood looking in each other's faces for one long moment —then Robson took a step forward—another—and stood outside the cave.

Still Forrester did not speak or move. His eyes for an instant left Robson's and wandered over the mountain-side and up to the sky, then settled back into their former steady gaze; he breathed through his set teeth, and his hands were clinched hard. Robson pushed his cowl farther back with his shaking hands, revealing his shaggy gray hair and long white beard, but his eyes never left the other's.

"At last, Gilbert Forrester—at last! face to face."

He made a sudden move forward, and Forrester started back—started back one fatal step, and, as Guy and his valet sprang forward with a cry, fell backward over the precipitous edge.

Over the edge, and down, down the fifty feet, to be dashed to a jelly against the rocky bed of the stream. Shudderingly Guy and the valet looked over, hoping to see some token of life; but no—the career of Gilbert Forrester was run, and he had gone to his last account.

Robson stood for several moments paralyzed; then he, too, approached close to the edge and gazed down upon the mangled mass which was all that remained of him who had been his unrelenting foe—long and silently.

Then he turned to Guy and grasped his arm:

"I did not touch him, Giulio, you saw it! I did not touch him! his blood is not on my hands!"

"No, no, uncle; it was an accident—he went too near!"

"Yes—yes—an accident." Robson repeated the words

eagerly. Then he looked down once more upon the mangled mass.

When he turned again to Guy, his face was ashy-white and his features worked strangely: he looked at his nephew earnestly, then threw his arms up over his head wildly, and laughed aloud.

"Free, Giulio, free! Free as air once more! at last! at last!"

The words had scarcely left his lips when he staggered a moment, clutched at his breast with both hands, and would have fallen, had not Guy caught him in his arms. A small stream of blood oozed from his lips, and as Guy laid him gently down upon the grass his eyes opened with a gaze of agony into his face—then were glazed in death.

He, too, had gone to his account. Is it permitted us to hope that in natures such as his, where the good found so much weakness to struggle against, that the evil was at times apparently uppermost,—that God's mercy will not outweigh his justice?

BOOK FIFTH.

CHAPTER I.

THREE years have passed, and Guy has spent two of them at Cambridge, a close student. This course was the advice of the earl, to whom the boy had made his way as soon as possible after the tragedy on the mountain.

He had not been down to Devonshire, neither had he seen Rose, whose grief for her father had been of that quiet, undemonstrative kind which outlasts more violent displays, and she still guarded his memory with the utmost tenderness. She had spent the last three years in strict retirement at Brandon or Charteris, with her governess, devoting herself to her studies.

Neither had Guy seen Margaret; it so happened that their visits to London had been made at different times. But it is June now, and he is to spend the midsummer holidays at Straithness.

It is June, and the day which Robson had told him was his birthday; a falsehood, for he had been born in November. A letter from Father Anselmo had arrived a day or two before, containing an inclosure which, the monk wrote, had been confided to him by Guy's uncle previous to his hurried visit to England, with the injunction that, if he did not return, it was to be given to him to open on his twenty-first birthday.

The young man sat with the package in his hand, and turned it over and over. He shrank from opening it, for what might it not contain of shame and sorrow! He finally laid it down, and giving himself a shake began to walk the floor.

Should he read it or should he not? that was the question! He was happy; his friends were kind and willing to do everything for him; his means were ample for his simple wants, and he had no debts; he knew not what Pandora's box he might be opening by the breaking of that seal,—a Pandora's box, it might be, without the last—hope. Surely his uncle had not kept him away from all his relations and in such ignorance of his family for nothing. His mother,—he had cherished her memory fondly,—could there be anything of disgrace resting on her name? If so, he would rather not know it,—infinitely better remain forever in ignorance!

Then again, he knew not who he was. He felt he could never take a place in the world—be really a man—without a name; and was Conway his own name? He felt a growing pride and ambition aroused within him since he had thrown away his boyhood. Could those feelings ever be gratified, be cultivated, even with the assistance of the Earl of Straithness, by a nameless man? Would not the apple of success be but Dead Sea fruit under such circumstances? Better know the worst than know nothing. It was a difficult question to solve, and one Guy felt himself unequal to. He finally decided to do nothing for the present, but to consult the earl while he was at Straithness.

He fully enjoyed himself at the old castle, and visiting the places of historical and romantic interest around. Margaret, Theodore, and Rose were all the family at first, but several guests, invited with a view to Guy's future

advancement, soon arrived and added much to the enjoyment of the rest.

Rochdale and Rose had been Guy's constant companions on his expeditions into the neighborhood, and both children had grown very fond of him. Margaret sometimes accompanied them, and her society always added to Guy's enjoyment, for she was the one woman in the world with whom he felt on easy, familiar terms, and she had a way with her of seeming to understand him before he spoke,—of knowing by instinct how he thought and felt, and sympathizing with each mood. He had a deep reverence and love for her, and felt no sacrifice on his part could be too great to give her happiness.

When in his room at the castle, Rochdale would often seek him and beg for music; the boy never tired of the violin. Often Rose would beg him to bring his instrument to the family-room or out upon the terrace, and while he played she would sit at Margaret's knee, her hand in hers, listening in rapt and dreamy silence.

And Charteris seemed never to fail in the interest he took in the young man, constantly suggesting and proposing for the future. Still, with a strange hesitancy, Guy shrank from speaking to him about the packet. Suppose he should advise its being opened? He was so happy now, and that might be the end of it.

One day Charteris had sought Guy's apartment with a view, he said, to the discussion of business. Lord Gray, one of the guests, had taken a great fancy to the young man, and proposed taking him with him on a tour, partly of pleasure, partly diplomatic, which he intended making shortly. It would be a very extended one,—lasting three, four, perhaps five years, and would include not only most of the Continental countries, but the United States and

some portions of South America. It was to Brazil and Buenos Ayres that the premier had particularly desired he should go on a mission requiring some delicacy. Guy's knowledge of languages would be of great use to him, besides he felt a great interest in him, and thought the situation one which would be of service to him. Charteris thought so too; the only thing was, would Guy be willing to forego the university course, and his great desire to settle down in England?

But Guy did not hesitate; he accepted at once and gladly. Then, when Charteris had expressed his satisfaction at his decision, he told him about the letter he had received from Father Anselmo, showing it to him, and of his perplexity.

"Will you open it for me?" he asked suddenly, as Charteris turned the envelope over in his hand.

For an instant the long white fingers hovered over the seal, then he shook his head.

"No, my boy, no; your eyes and yours alone should be the first to rest upon the secret this paper contains. It is not for me to meddle with it."

And thus Guy Charteris put his son from him with his own hands.

Guy replaced the package in the secret drawer of his desk whence he had taken it, and which contained another envelope in which was folded away a bunch of violets withered and dried.

"Keep the package, Giulio, until the hour comes when you need the knowledge of the secret it contains, then open it bravely. But, under present circumstances, I see no necessity for the information, and, as you say, it may be of a painful character, and do no good."

"Yes, that is a good idea; but what if the need never comes?" replied Guy.

"Then open it when you feel strong enough to bear the pain it may inflict. I am sorry your visit to Straithness must be cut short, my boy, but Lord Gray starts in a fortnight. However, you must always look upon my house as your home, and let us hear from you often and regularly."

Guy approached the earl with unwonted moisture in his eyes. "Oh, my lord, my friend, how can words thank you for your kindness to the orphan! May I one day be able to prove my gratitude!"

And forgetful of his twenty-one years,—of the social distance between them,—he threw his arms around Charteris's neck and kissed him.

The earl did not repulse him; he held him to him as if he had been a woman, with one arm, and pushed his brown curls back from his forehead, gazing into the depths of his large blue eyes, while he wondered what so fascinated him in them.

When Guy left Straithness it was with the regret of all, from the highest to the lowest, and kindest wishes for his safety and return.

Margaret, as she took his hand at the last moment and looked up into his face, read there the unexpressed yearning, and putting up her lips gave him a motherly kiss. Little Rose threw her arms around his neck and cried because he would not stay, and Theodore insisted upon accompanying him in the dog-cart to the station, and begged him to take Rollo,—a great Newfoundland dog, who had replaced Shott, long gathered to his fathers, and who was the boy's special pride and pet,—he could think of nothing more valuable to give him.

Lord Gray proved to be a most agreeable companion, and everything promised to be *couleur de rose*. Guy, after the pain of parting with his kind friends at Straith-

ness, felt all the satisfaction of having a definite object or plan, and the pleasure which youth always finds in novelty and change.

CHAPTER II.

It would be useless to follow the travelers on their journey. They turned their faces westward at first, and crossed the Atlantic to New York. There they found a hospitable welcome from Dr. and Mrs. Schroeder, who had been settled in their old home more than a year.

Five, nearly six years sped swiftly by to Guy, and when at the end of that time he presented himself, a tall, sun-bronzed, bearded man, at the gate of the monastery, his old friends did not know him. He found Father Anselmo and Father Pedro, the organist, still living; but there were many old, familiar faces missing, and some new, strange ones in their places.

Lord Gray waited at Trieste for Guy to make this visit, so he could only give a few days to the home of his childhood, and then had to rejoin his patron. Thence they went to Vienna, but Guy could not bring himself to visit Marburg. Passing through Berlin and Brussels they visited Paris, and then once more found themselves on English ground.

Of course his first thought was for his friend, the earl. Letters had passed pretty frequently between them, but he had not heard very lately, and he was uncertain where they were. In Charteris's last letter he had said something about having to go over to Ireland, to Worthington. Rose was, by the terms of her grandfather's will, to be of age at eighteen, and she then lacked only a few weeks

of her birthday, and he intended taking her over to her Irish estate to celebrate it.

On Guy's arrival in London, he found the family was still at Worthington. Lord Gray's movements had been so uncertain he had been unable to inform them when to expect him, and so his coming, though they knew he must return soon, would be something of the nature of a surprise. He decided to follow them, and, taking leave of his kind friend, started for Liverpool that night.

On his way he could not but speculate on the changes which the last seven years had brought about. Rose, the little girl whose arms had been so tightly twined around his neck that day he left Straithness, was a young lady now, a baroness in her own right just entering upon her majority. He must remember all this, and call her by her title—Lady Worthington! Theodore, the baby who had stood up in the dog-cart at the station, and striven with manly pride to keep the tears back, while he waved his hat as long as the train was in sight, was an Etonian or a Rugby boy now! And the earl and countess, what of them? Guy's heart went out towards them with fondest affection as he thought of them.

Worthington barony was situated in one of the loveliest parts of Ireland, down in the southwest. Hiring an open car at Cork, Guy started, prepared to enjoy fully the beauty of the country. It was August, and the day a perfect one, and the fifteen miles were soon gotten over. About a mile from Worthington, a stone having become wedged in the foot of one of the horses, the driver had some difficulty in dislodging it. While he was delayed, Guy dismounted from the car and strolled along the road, telling the man he could overtake him.

He had not gone far when the clatter of horses' hoofs along a side road attracted him, and he saw a young girl,

mounted upon a fine horse and followed by a groom, approaching him. As she reached the main road she turned and seemed to be waiting for somebody, and presently far down the lane a horseman appeared, putting his horse to his fastest speed. As he approached she shook her whip at him and exclaimed,—

"Oh, Theo, you naughty fellow!"

"Oh, you unkind Rosey, to run away!" laughed the boy, as he drew up beside her. "I'll tell Giulio just as soon as he gets back how bad you are!"

"I'll tell, too," she replied gaily, and then they turned their horses' heads and saw a stranger standing near them.

Guy approached and raised his hat. They both looked at his bearded face without recognition, and as her horse swerved at sight of him, Rose dropped her whip.

He picked it up, and, as he handed it to her, said, "Lady Worthington, I believe?"

"Yes," she replied, with a questioning look.

He returned the gaze and smiled. "Don't you know me?" he said.

"Giulio Conway! Hi! It's old Giulio!" exclaimed Theodore, and in another instant he was on the ground wringing Guy's hand.

"I know you now," said Rose gently, "and am very, very glad to see you!" and she put down her hand to him.

"Here, Mike, take my horse; or, no, please get off and let this gentleman have yours," exclaimed Rochdale eagerly.

"My car will be along directly; perhaps Mike will wait for that, and ride on with the driver?" said Guy.

"All right, yer honor," replied the groom, turning away; and Guy sprang upon his horse and rode to Rose's side.

CHAPTER III.

As they galloped on, Rochdale's tongue was not silent a moment; he rattled off every item of news he thought would interest Guy, and fortunately did not need many answers, for he for whom he was exerting himself was far more interested in studying the fair young girl at whose side he rode.

And Rose Forrester was worthy of his attention. She had developed into a womanhood passing fair. Her features were delicate and clearly cut, and the rose-bud lips, which had been put up with a childish kiss to Guy on that first meeting in Venice, were fuller and sweeter, but had lost none of their younger beauty. Her complexion was clear white and red, and her hair, a rich chestnut-brown, almost an auburn, was long and heavy. For greater convenience in riding it had been all braided together, and hung from under her hat in one long plait, the end of which was lost in the folds of her habit-skirt. Her eyes were brown, large, and soft in their expression. As they rode, however, she kept the lids shyly down, and once only did she raise them in speaking to Guy, but what she saw in his eyes caused her to lower them quickly again and brought a richer tint to her cheeks. But she was not displeased; to tell the truth, Guy had always been her hero. The mystery attached to him, and his sad and romantic story, had always had a peculiar charm for her, and that short summer at Straithness had only served to strengthen her admiration. Then, too, he was so different in character from other young men: not that she

had been old enough to judge much of that before he left, but she had heard her guardian speak of him so often, and had read his letters with much interest. Besides that, his rich voice and his flute and violin had been other attractions. And when he returned, grown taller, bronzed by exposure and bearded like a pard, the picture her imagination had formed was perfected.

"Here come Rose and Theo at the greatest speed of their horses!" exclaimed Margaret, as she looked from one of the windows of Worthington and watched the young people come up the avenue. "I wonder if anything could induce Rose to let Selim walk a quarter of a mile—she'll break her neck some day, and, of course, Rochdale will follow suit!"

"Not necessarily," replied Charteris, laughing, as he got up and lounged over to the window; "but who have they with them, on Mike's horse?"

"A stranger," replied Margaret; "I know no one in the neighborhood who has a beard nearly a yard long!"

As they neared the steps, Guy saw them, and taking off his hat waved it over his head; Margaret's quick eye recognized him then.

"It is Giulio Conway, dear—he has come right over to us!"

"Yes, it is Giulio," replied Charteris; and they both hurried to the door to greet the new-comer.

CHAPTER IV.

No son could have been more warmly welcomed than was Guy, by the earl and countess. While waiting for the arrival of the car with his portmanteau, question followed question in quick succession. Then Charteris himself showed him to his room and told him he would only have time to dress for dinner, and sent Dennis to wait upon him.

When Guy descended to the drawing-room, he found Rose there alone. She had changed her habit for an evening-dress of pale-blue silk, and her white neck and rounded arms gleamed through the meshes of costly lace. Her hair was arranged in most becoming fashion in braids and curls, and as she turned from the window where she had been standing and raised her dark-brown eyes,—

> "In whose depths the beautiful and pure
> Alone were mirrored,—"

Guy thought he had never seen so lovely a picture.

"Lady Worthington," he said, as he drew a curious-looking box from his pocket, "I hope you will not be offended by the liberty I have taken in bringing you a souvenir from across the water."

"A souvenir! oh, Mr. Conway, did you indeed think of me when you had so much that was new and strange to interest you?"

"Could I ever forget Straithness, my lady!" was Guy's answer, as he opened the box and revealed, upon a black velvet lining, massive ornaments of singularly wrought

and pure gold, consisting of ear-rings, pin, necklace, bandeau for the hair, bracelets and armlets connected by chains, all of the most dainty and peculiar workmanship.

"Oh!" exclaimed Rose, "how beautiful—how unique! —I do thank you so very much, Mr. Conway."

"They are of Mexican gold, wrought by Mexicans, and are, as you say, unique, this side of the water; though every Mexican woman of any pretension to wealth or position considers them a necessary part of her possessions. The box, too, is of Indian workmanship, and is a souvenir of Niagara Falls. I had it made by an Indian woman during my stay there, and the lining added in New York."

"You could not have brought me anything that could have pleased me more; and now you may be sure I am too much of a woman not to be most anxious to try their effect—and that you may give me the benefit of your experience, I shall make this pier-glass my toilette-stand," said Rose, going to one of the mirrors and taking off her pearl ornaments as she did so. "Come," she added, laughingly looking back at him, "you must tell me how to arrange this on my head. Do the Mexican women wear their hair 'tucked up' or 'flowing?'"

"Flowing, Lady Worthington; that wondrous structure must come down. Curls, too, are out of order; only braids are patronized by the señoritas," answered Guy, mischievously.

"Then it must come down, and shall," said Rose. "What would poor Kitty say if she saw her careful work so carelessly undone! but necessity knows no law." As she spoke she took out a few hair-pins and her comb, and the dark tresses fell almost to the floor.

"I can't help it if it *will* curl, you know, Mr. Conway, but we will try and forget that irregularity."

"Yes, we'll excuse them for the nonce," replied Guy;

"now the bandeau comes a little farther forward, right upon the edge of the hair, so that the centre ornament falls on the forehead—so—that is it; now catch the side hair over the bandeau just above the ear," he continued, looking at the beautiful picture in the glass; "a little farther back—no—not quite so tight, let it loosen a little," he added, his artistic eye delighting in the effect, and almost forgetting that he was not painting a picture. "There! now the effect is perfect!"

"How long the ear-rings are!" exclaimed Rose, "and how heavy," as the pendants nearly touched her shoulders. "Ah!" she exclaimed, as she tried to clasp the necklace, "it hurts me!" and she withdrew the heavy gold, showing where the tender skin had been broken by some roughened edge or point. "What a coward I am, and how rude—Mr. Conway, pray forgive me!" she added a moment afterwards, fearful of having wounded *him* by her thoughtless exclamation.

"Forgive *me*," replied Guy, "for causing you even that slight pain; believe me, I would rather—" he stopped abruptly, and then continued—"let me see if I cannot remove the cause of the trouble with my knife; there is very little alloy—only enough to work the gold—in these things, so of course it is soft; I think I can make it all right. Ah, here it is; now, that is smooth; but let me see if there are any more," he continued, looking over the ornament. "No, it is all smooth now."

She took it and clasped it around her lovely neck in silence, put the pin in its place, and then picked up the bracelets.

"Permit me," said Guy, taking them from her hand, and clasping the armlet above the dimpled elbow, and the bracelet on the wrist, almost before she was aware of what he was about to do. "You could not have managed them

without help," he said quietly, "and it was not necessary to call Kitty for that—now, may I put the other on?" and without waiting for her consent, he stepped to her other side and clasped the golden bands upon the other arm also.

"Dost thou like the picture?" he asked, bending over her as she stood arrayed in the odd ornaments, her full length reflected in the mirror.

Rose looked up at him a moment, then down again, and said almost in a whisper, only, "You are very kind, Mr. Conway;" and turned away.

Guy thought at first that she was offended, and hurried to say something to deprecate her displeasure; but at that moment Rochdale entered and met Rose face to face.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "What have we here! An Indian princess surely!"

"Are they not beautiful, Theo?" she asked.

"Very," he replied, dryly.

"And was it not kind in Mr. Conway, to think of me when so far away as Mexico?"

"Very. May I ask, sir, who you are, who presumes to make the Baroness Worthington so fine a present?" he turned upon Guy, as though he would have annihilated him by a glance.

"A question I cannot answer, my lord, for I know not who I am—but——"

"But!" tinterrupted the boy in a fury of temper; "there is no 'but,' sir—you—you are exceedingly impertinent!"

"Lord Rochdale!"

Guy did not recognize the voice for an instant, so transformed was the young girl by her anger.

Rochdale started as if he had been stung, but without allowing him a chance to speak a word she turned to Guy and held out both her hands.

"Let me thank you again for your beautiful souvenir, Mr. Conway, and for the kindness that remembered me when you had so much to think of."

Guy took the outstretched hands and gazed into the sweet, excited face; then, without reply, raised the hands one after the other to his lips and left the room.

Half an hour after, as he was sitting at his dressing-room window, lost in a delicious reverie over all that Rose's evident partiality for him *might* mean, a tap on the door suddenly dissolved his "Chateaux en Espagne," and Lady Straithness entered.

He sprang up to greet her, but she declined a seat and told him at once her errand.

"I have come, Mr. Conway, to beg you to excuse Rochdale's rudeness this evening—and to tell you how deeply I regret the occurrence. He will make his own apology, for he is thoroughly ashamed of himself, but I felt that I, too, must offer an *amende*."

"I beg, Lady Margaret, you will say nothing more; it is very painful after—I fear I was too bold in bringing Lady Worthington a gift which she is kind enough to accept, but which——"

"Not too bold, Giulio; only rather unconventional! However, under the circumstances, it was excusable. I must say more, my dear Giulio, about Theo, to make you fully comprehend the situation. It has long been a favorite idea with Straithness, that Rose and Rochdale should marry."

"Indeed," replied Guy quietly; he had turned away as she spoke, not wishing her to see the expression of his face, and was watching, through the open window, the moon rise over the park-trees.

"Yes. Sir Gilbert Forrester wished the same thing, and did all in his power to bring it about. Theo and

Rose have grown up together, and though she is the elder, she seems very fond of him. And Rochdale is devotedly attached to her."

Guy tried to say something, but his tongue was dry and refused its office; at length he got out the words,—

"And Ro—, Lady Worthington, does she return this devotion?"

"As I said, she seems very fond of him, but, of course, nothing is settled; for some time to come nothing can be settled, and Rose is a woman, therefore the state of her mind cannot so readily be discovered. My only reason for telling you this, Giulio, is to excuse Theo's rudeness, if it can be excused, by giving you a reason for it, and also to beg you will say nothing to Straithness—to his father—about it. Will you promise me?"

"Promise, my dear Lady Straithness? A word from you to me is a command! Besides, you are making a great deal out of a trifle. Believe me, nothing painful will ever be connected with my remembrance of this evening."

"That is very generous, Giulio; now I must go. You will come down?"

"Most assuredly—with you."

"No, wait a moment, Rochdale must speak to you; he knows nothing of my visit."

"As you please, but it is not necessary."

"There, you are too generous; the boy must atone for his fault: it was a grave one."

When he found himself again alone, Guy sank into the chair by the window where he had been sitting, and, letting his head sink upon the sill, muttered to himself,—

"Fool! I might have known such fruit hung too high for me! Who am I, to aspire to the love of the Baroness Worthington? She tolerates and is kind to me as she

would be to her dog! No more! Bah, Giulio Conway, have you come back to England to lose your manhood over a pretty face? Still, she cannot be so consummate an actress so young. She defended me so nobly from Rochdale's anger!"

So hope pressed down the doubts, and soon resumed her paramount influence. But his thoughts were in a tumult, and there was such a singing in his ears that he did not hear Rochdale's knock, and started like a guilty thing when the boy laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Giulio, forgive me; I was awful rude——"

"There, my lord, not another word," said Guy, laying his hand on the other's mouth; "I can bear much from your father's son, so no more. Is not that a beautiful picture,—the moon poised, as it were, upon that spear of cloud?"

"But, Guy, please don't call me 'my lord,' or I'll think you still bear malice."

"Very well then, Theodore, let us leave moon-gazing and join the rest in the drawing-room; come!" And taking the boy's hand he ran lightly down-stairs.

CHAPTER V.

But when he had time to think over the conversation, he did not find quite so much cause for elation. Rose was free, to be sure, but might it not be that her inclination pointed also towards the accomplishment of the earl's and her father's wishes? Rochdale was a boy, it was true, but a very frank, unspoilt, winning one; might she not love him better than she cared to show yet? But Rose was a woman,

although only a girl in years. Girls bloom into their maturity as suddenly as a flower, which, a modest, simple bud at evening, greets the rising sun with the diamond dew upon its open petals, and boys are such very boys even after the down is upon their chins. It did not seem possible that she could feel the respect, reverence, love, and confidence for him that a woman, true to herself, must feel for the man she makes her husband.

Such were some of Guy's musings, when, after a pleasant evening, he found himself alone once more. He determined to watch and wait; to study the family-book laid open before him, and neither to throw away his chance by a too hasty decision, nor spoil all by a too sudden expression of his feelings towards Rose.

How nicely we plan and arrange our actions and words for the future, and how certainly some unforeseen event upsets our most closely studied calculations! And Guy was no exception to the rule.

They remained but a few days longer at Worthington, long enough to give Rose an opportunity of showing the beauties of her domain and the surrounding country to Guy, then after a trip to the Killarney Lakes they were to return to Straithness.

"Are you bound to return to Lord Gray by any particular time?" asked the earl, as he and Guy were taking one of their customary walks, "or have you severed your connection with him?"

"By no means!" returned Guy; "I should be very sorry to do so. After so many years of closest intimacy and companionship I have formed an attachment for his lordship second—" he hesitated, "second only to that I feel for you, my lord."

"Thanks, Giulio, thanks; believe me, I shall ever have the deepest interest and warmest affection in and for you.

But you have answered the second part of my question, not the first; must you return by any specified time?"

"I am free till December. Then Lord Gray wishes me to go to Algiers and Tunis with him for about six weeks."

"That will bring you back to London about the time of the meeting of Parliament. We will be in town then. Rose is to be presented, so you will find us ready for you, for remember, Giulio, my house is always your home."

"Lord Straithness, how can I ever, ever return your kindness to the unknown orphan?"

"Who knows? Some time you may, if you think it worth returning, but I am only pleasing myself, Giulio, in having you near me; there is a sort of restful feeling in your presence, my dear boy, that I cannot account for nor explain. As if—— But you will go with us to Straithness, and remain there till obliged to join Lord Gray?"

"You know I need no pressing to do so."

"That is right. And now that package, Giulio; have you ever opened it?"

"No, my lord; I have never seen the necessity, and as the time grows longer I dread doing so more and more. Sometimes I have thought of destroying it."

"Don't do that, Giulio, don't do that! It may be of vital importance to you some day! Guard it carefully!"

"If you think it best, my lord, I will."

"Most assuredly I do. And now, Giulio, you have been long enough with us to judge——" He paused a moment, and Guy's heart stood still. Was it of Rose and Rochdale he was about to speak?

But the earl continued: "You will tell me plainly, my boy, how do you think Lady Margaret is looking? does

she seem to be breaking down at all? You can tell, not having seen her for some time, better than we who are always with her."

"Indeed, Lord Straithness, you surprise me! I have noticed nothing unusual in Lady Margaret; her hair has changed rather more than her age should warrant; but that, you know, is a constitutional defect: some turn gray very early."

"And is that all you notice?"

"Yes, all. But what is wrong, my lord?"

"Ah, Giulio, Giulio, my happiness hangs by a very thread! I have not spoken of it to any one before, but it is a relief to talk to you. Last winter, while we were at Charteris, Lady Margaret had a very strange and sudden attack, which very nearly proved fatal. Dr. Bonnycastle, by his unremitting care,—and fortunately he was at the Manor when she was seized, — saved her life; but even when she was recovered he looked so grave, and asked so many questions about Mr. Thornton's death, and that of his wife, that I insisted upon his telling me what he had in his mind. He then informed me that my wife had had an attack of heart-disease; that the disease was one that could not be checked, though very slow in its developments, generally; still that she was liable to these attacks at any time, and might die in one of them. At the same time that she might live many years—survive me, in fact."

"My dear Lord Straithness!" cried Guy, wringing his hand.

"So you see, my dear boy, the Damocles' sword."

"Does Lady Margaret know?"

"No. She must be kept in perfect ignorance, lest she grow nervous and so accelerate the disease. I have borne the terrible knowledge as well as I could all this

time, and tell you, knowing that you will sympathize with me and help me."

"Indeed I will. But this is terrible?"

"How terrible you can but guess—but, remember, never by word or look show any anxiety."

"You may trust me, my lord."

They had been approaching the house during this conversation, and now as they emerged from the shrubberies, found Margaret and Rose ready dressed, awaiting them on the terrace.

"Do you know what time it is, truants?" asked Lady Straithness, as they came up.

"It must be late from the looks of things," replied her husband. "Come, Giulio, we have no time to spare. Dinner will be announced presently."

Guy delayed an instant to hand Rose one of her namesakes, then hastened after the earl, to his dressing-room.

At dinner he noticed that the flower he had given Rose nestled among the lace at her breast; yet she showed no consciousness of having done anything to please him, and he was uncertain whether it had been chosen for its own beauty or as his gift.

BOOK SIXTH.

CHAPTER I.

"My dear husband, are you not doing a very foolish thing?" asked Lady Margaret one day as she joined the earl at one of the windows at Straithness, and watched the forms of Guy and Rose disappear down the avenue in close conversation, evidently, for his head was bent over hers very frequently.

"Why, and how, Pearl?"

"In having Giulio here, thrown so constantly with Rose."

"Still I do not comprehend."

"Yes, you do, Charteris—yes, you do!"

"Indeed, I do not; my dear, you will have to explain yourself more fully—I grow stupid as I grow older."

"Men are always stupid about some things," she replied, laughing.

"Thank you, in the name of my sex; yes, I am very stupid now, for I do not see when or how I have done a foolish thing—still, not being Solomon I may——"

She looked up at him, and saw that though his face was solemn his eyes were brimful of fun.

"Now, you are laughing at me—that is man-like too; you *do* understand what I mean."

"You'll have to put it into plainer language than you

have done yet," he replied, seating himself and drawing her down upon his knee; "come, Pearl, what bugaboo disturbs your serenity?"

"Don't you think, dear, you are leaving Giulio and Rose too much together?"

"Not at all; they can take care of themselves and of each other—at least he can of her."

"But Theo—ought we not to guard his interests in his absence?"

"Ah, there's where the shoe pinches, is it? Well, how must we go about guarding Rochdale's interests?"

"By preventing young Conway from seeing so much of Rose, particularly in these long walks they are so fond of taking tête-à-tête—or by telling him our plans; that, however, I have already done, and it has had no effect upon his behavior. Don't you think it rather dishonorable in him, when he knows what we wish and intend, to do as he does?"

"That depends. Did you tell him Rose was positively engaged to Theo?"

"No. How could I? There is no engagement, though I am sure it is not Rochdale's fault. I told him what we wished and how much attached Theo was to her——"

"And Rose? Did you say anything of the state of her affections?"

"I told him I thought she cared a great deal for Theo; though, of course, the real state of her feelings could not be known, as no words had been spoken on the subject."

"Then, my dear, Giulio is free from all blame; all's fair in love and war, you know, and I dare say he thinks if he can win her he has the right to try. I don't think Giulio Conway could be guilty of a dishonorable thought —much less action. I confess I had not noticed the state of things; men are stupid sometimes, I'll admit; but if,

as you think, Giulio has become attached to Rose, he is perfectly right to try to win her."

"And Rochdale——"

"Is a boy of fifteen;—five—six years must pass before he begins the world, and you can't keep Rose under a bushel all that time. His 'calf' love for her will have died a natural death in less than that time, and his choice for life may be a very different character."

"I am sure I thought you had the match very much at heart," Margaret said quietly.

"My dear Pearl, where did you get the idea?"

"Now, Guy, you know you often used to speak of it."

"As a thing that *might* happen, and which, if it did come about naturally, would please me; but not as a thing I should plan for or insist upon."

"Oh, well—then it is all right, I suppose," replied Margaret, rising, as her eyes filled.

"No, my darling, it is not all right, if there are tears in those eyes!" he exclaimed, drawing her down to him again. "Why, Madge, Madge, what a foolish notion to take into your head! Don't you see that Theo is one of the most boyish of boys, and that Rose is thoughtful and mature beyond her age? The three years' difference in their ages is really doubled by their dispositions; and while it is very likely Theo may love Rose now with a boy's first passion, it is very certain Rose can never love him enough to marry him."

"But Conway—would she not be throwing herself away to marry him? Who is he?"

"Who he is he does not know himself; but that he is in every way worthy of Rose would be true were he the son of the lowest hind that lives; oh, the blessed consistency of you republicans!"

"I see we don't think alike on the subject, and never

will," she said, coldly, as she made another attempt to leave him. "I felt a great interest in the young man at first, and do still; but I cannot understand your infatuation, my lord."

"Not yet, my lady," he replied, still detaining her. "Look here, Madge, darling!" he continued, drawing her clouded face around towards him, "are we going to have our first quarrel, after nearly twenty years of married life, for nothing? I confess, I do feel a great interest and affection for Giulio Conway, and if I thought Rochdale would make another such man I should ask no more. There is something about the young man that draws me to him with strange force; but my precious wife is not uneasy, surely, nor fears that her claims or those of our child will be compromised? Come, Pearl, such petty feeling is unworthy of Margaret Thornton and of my wife."

He had never spoken in such a tone before, and for answer she sobbed piteously.

"There, Pearl, there; forgive me, darling, it is many a year since I caused tears to fill your eyes; I never thought to do so again."

He felt terribly alarmed, dreading one of her attacks and the consequences. But she dried her eyes presently, and held up her lips for a kiss.

"And now, dear, I would like to ask your approbation of a wish I have, which I will not carry out unless you approve. Shall I tell it to you?"

"By all means," she answered.

"I want to do something substantial for Giulio Conway. Do you still feel interest in him enough to allow me to carry out my wishes?" he asked, smiling.

"Oh, Guy, you know I would not prevent your doing anything for him. Because I love Rose as a dear daughter,

and wished—and was mistaken as to your plans,—do not think so meanly of me as to think I would do aught to injure Giulio Conway!"

"Spoken like my Margaret, my Pearl of Pearls! Well, what I want to do is this—you remember Fernlie, in Kent?"

She nodded.

"It is a small place, giving a rent-roll of only four or five thousand pounds, and we never go there; what do you say to giving it to Giulio? Rochdale will not miss it, nor you, should you survive me——"

"Hush, Guy, hush!" she said, putting her hand over his mouth, "don't speak in that way. Give it to him by all means! I am only too glad you thought of it. It returns a member to the House, does it not?"

"Yes; and the election comes on this year. I thought Giulio might run for it, and with my influence he is sure to win."

"My noble Guy," she said, putting her arms around his neck and kissing him, "my precious husband! and now, dear, I must leave you; our tête-à-tête has lasted as long as that of the young folks, for see, there they come up the avenue."

She left him as she spoke, and reached the hall. He turned to look out of the window, and as he did so he heard her smothered cry of "Guy!" And sprang to the door in time to see her fall at the foot of the staircase.

Again the attack was a violent one, but again the fell destroyer was held back from his victim, and Margaret recovered.

CHAPTER II.

And Guy and Rose?

Oh, the oft-told tale! Oh, the hopes and dreams and loves of youth! What words of mine can picture the happiness, the perfect satisfaction, the joy without flaw or drawback, that simple existence was to them? They neither thought nor planned for the future; they were content to drink the blissful cup the present placed at their lips. That is, when they were together. When alone, Guy had many a struggle with himself. He supposed that what Lady Straithness had told him was correct as to the earl's wishes for the match. Still, he was puzzled by his patron's perfect indifference as to their being so much together, and his never once showing, by word or look, that he thought Guy was overstepping the bounds of his uncertain position. And there had been so many opportunities by which he could have intimated his wishes on the subject. Lady Straithness he thought looked a little more coolly on him than she had done, but the change was so slight he persuaded himself it was only in his own fancy and consciousness.

Sometimes he thought he would go away, he was doing wrong to remain. Then he would tell himself that he had not sought the invitation to Straithness; it would be silly in the extreme to cut himself off from so much happiness when he would be obliged to leave it soon to fulfill his engagement with Lord Gray. One thing, too, he was satisfied about: Rose did not love Rochdale. To her

he was a boy, loved as a younger brother, the companion of her childhood, and dear to her for his many noble and good qualities, but love him as the man she would marry? How could she? But did she love him—Guy? On that point he was not so certain, and longed, yet dreaded to know the truth.

So the glorious autumn days passed. There were several other guests at the castle,—men and women of note in the social or intellectual world,—and Guy fully enjoyed their society; but no moments were so precious as those passed beside Rose Forrester. They had many quiet talks, too, on sober and serious subjects. One of these conversations was important, being on a topic which was to have an influence on their future they little thought of at the time. How often, afterwards, did they remember that evening and every little adjunct of the scene!

It was an unusually mild afternoon in October. Summer was still struggling with Winter, and unwilling to acknowledge herself vanquished; the sun shone quite warmly; the later flowers still lingered on their stems; and, though over all the trees the beautiful month had thrown his oriflamme, only a few, here and there, had rejected the mantle, and cast its glories to the earth. They were walking along their favorite path, which led up the hill beside a noisy brook, which tumbled and slid and babbled along over the stones and moss down to the distant river. They were fond of this walk, and had often taken it, amusing themselves watching the gambols of the water, or the effects of sun and shadow on the surrounding scenery. To-day the air was clear and only pleasantly fresh, bringing a brighter color to Rose's cheeks as it touched them, and she had never looked lovelier.

They had been reading the "Tale of Two Cities," and were talking over the beautiful devotion of the friend;

thence the conversation changed to sacrifices in general, and a vicarious atonement.

"A woman might be able to give up all hope of happiness in this world for the sake of making an atonement for another's crimes, but I doubt if a man could," said Guy.

"There you do your sex wrong, Giulio," replied Rose. "I think man as capable of sacrifice as woman——"

"No, they are not; a man's nature is more essentially selfish than a woman's; they are selfish even where they love the deepest."

"I grant you that," replied Rose, "but I do deny that they are not able to rise above that selfishness when occasion offers. You must not try to give me such a bad opinion of yourself as that."

"Well," said Guy, "it is a point the truth of which I hope we neither of us will have occasion to try; but if we did, I fear I should need some very strong support to enable me to act up to your generous ideal."

"And do you doubt, Giulio, of that help being given you?" she asked, stopping in her walk and looking up at him.

He gazed down into her beautiful eyes, all his soul in his own.

"Never, Rose, while——" But the words that were trembling on his lips were destined not to pass them that day. A gay laugh awoke the echoes near them, and a dog bounded out of the underbrush beside the path, followed by two gentlemen and a keeper, with guns over their shoulders.

"What luck, Mr. Forbes?" asked Rose of one of them.

"Very little, my lady; the birds are shy."

"I never saw such ill luck in my life," remarked the other gentleman.

"Then you had better hasten home," replied Rose, "and forget your disappointment in a game of croquet."

"With you as a partner?" he asked. And Guy watched for Rose's answer eagerly. She was about to assent, when she happened to glance at Guy, and the yearning, dumb appeal in his face decided her.

"Not to-day, Sir Edward," she replied; "I promised to drive Lady Julia Seton over to the ruins, so you will have to find a substitute."

Involuntarily she glanced at Guy again, and read his thanks in his eyes. She dropped her own, and during the rest of the walk to the castle hardly spoke.

CHAPTER III.

Two or three days after this interrupted interview, a letter from Lord Gray summoned Guy to London. He promised not to detain him long; it was only a little matter of business for which he required his presence. But even for the short period of two weeks Guy regretted being taken away from his happiness. The earl bade him hurry back, and Margaret said something kind about his return; but nothing satisfied him until he saw the pleasure which sprang into Rose's eyes when he mentioned that his stay would be short.

He was at his lordship's service all day; but one evening, having nothing to do, he decided to visit Covent Garden Theatre, where he saw a new play advertised. When he had procured his ticket and taken his place in the stalls, he discovered that he was very early, for there were only two or three people scattered about in

the house, and he glanced around carelessly until his attention was more particularly attracted by a couple near him. They were evidently father and daughter,—the man not more than forty-five or six, but prematurely old from care and anxiety, and the girl had certainly not seen more than eighteen summers. That they were desperately poor it only required half a glance to see, and Guy wondered how they could afford the seats they occupied. The girl was very pretty, with a delicate fair beauty, which no plainness or poverty of dress could disfigure, and the man had been handsome before sorrow or anxiety had thinned his hair and dashed it strongly with gray, or lined his face with a heavy finger. Guy saw that the two were very nervous, and that every one who entered the house was eagerly scanned and counted. Presently a young man came into the stalls, and on seeing this couple went over to them and spoke pleasantly. Guy thought the face of the new-comer seemed familiar, but was more interested watching the expression which passed like a ray of sunshine over the girl's countenance, and seemed reflected in a more subdued manner in the man's.

The young man who had last entered at length looked at the number of the check he held, and began to search for his seat. It so happened that it was the one next to that occupied by Guy, and as he took it he glanced at Guy, and seemed to recognize him also, partially. Two or three times they caught each other's eyes as they glanced furtively at each other. And at last the stranger laughed gaily, and said,—

"We certainly have met before; but where, I am as much at a loss to say as you seem to be. My name is Wetherby."

"Yes, I know it is now. And mine is Conway—Giulio Conway."

"Exactly; how stupid in us not to remember! And what have you been doing since you left Cambridge to run round the world with Lord Gray?"

Guy replied to him by giving an acount of his travels. Wetherby and he had been quite good friends at college; that they were not intimate was owing only to Guy's reserved disposition.

"And where are you staying now?"

"At the Oriental, where I shall be happy to see you before I return to Scotland; I am visiting my kind friend and patron the Earl of Straithness."

"Oh, fortunate of men!" exclaimed Wetherby.

"Wherefore?" asked Guy.

"To breathe the same air with that charming Lady Worthington! Why, she was the toast of London last season, although not regularly out, and there isn't a marriageable youth from twenty to sixty who is not ready to be at her feet. But let me give you my card."

Guy took it, and thanked him, and not wishing to make Rose the subject of conversation just then, asked Wetherby who the gentleman and young girl were to whom he had spoken on entering.

"Oh, he is the author of the new play, and as he is in very bad health and still worse circumstances, the success to-night is of great importance to him. His name is Lowry."

"Poor fellow! I hope he will not be disappointed!" returned Guy, and as the orchestra just then began the overture, the young men remained silent and settled themselves comfortably to give their attention to the play.

It *was* a success, but the eagerly-hoped-for termination of his anxiety was almost too much for the nervous man, and when eager cries of "author!" "author!" resounded

through the house, and the daughter turned around with glad congratulations on her lips, she found her father had fainted. Wetherby sprang up to go to them as soon as he saw what had happened, and, with a natural impulse, Conway followed him; together they got the poor man into the air, and restored him to consciousness. But he refused to return to the theatre, and asked Wetherby to accompany him home.

"I must go first, papa, or mamma will be so frightened if she has no preparation!" exclaimed the daughter.

"Conway, will you?—Mr. Conway, Miss Lowry," said Wetherby.

And thus introduced, he offered her his arm and they hurried out of the theatre; they walked quickly, and only spoke occasionally; the girl too anxious to get home, and Conway not knowing what subject of conversation to start under the circumstances.

He was very gentle with the girl, and had offered her his arm regardless of her shabby dress. Just as he bent over her to hear some trifling remark she made, a gentleman passing looked at Conway curiously, and as he got beyond him stood still and, looking back, watched him for some distance.

It was the Earl of Straithness.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARTERIS was a little annoyed at meeting Guy thus accompanied, but not being suspicious, he guessed pretty nearly at the truth, supposing he had been called upon by some female in distress to render her temporary assistance. He called the next day at the Oriental, but Guy was not at home.

Regretting the necessity of waiting any longer before seeing him, he walked slowly down the street, and had not gone far before he overtook Lord Gray, who, linking his arm in that of the earl, introduced his companion, a relation of his wife's, an Irishman with the historic name of O'More.

O'More, or The O'More, which was his proper title, was about thirty years of age, frank, genial, and generous, like all his race, and Charteris had not looked into his well-opened blue eyes twice before he liked him. He had just come into an estate in Ireland in the neighborhood of Worthington, and expressed his desire to make the acquaintance of the young baroness.

An invitation to Straithness followed as a matter of course. The three gentlemen walked slowly along, when suddenly Charteris saw Guy standing at the corner of the next street, talking to the same shabbily-dressed female with whom he had seen him the night before. He glanced at Lord Gray, but remembered his lordship's shortness of sight, which would have prevented him from recognizing his own father ten feet from him, and in his heart blessed the defect, for he might have hastily misjudged Conway, and unfortunate results might have followed.

Before they reached the corner, Guy moved on with his companion in earnest attention to what she was saying; they walked down the street, he with his hands crossed behind him and his head bent to listen, she with her face turned towards him, gesticulating slightly but gracefully and speaking rapidly.

A young man came up to them, was about to speak to Guy, then noticed his companion, and passed on, turning afterwards to give the couple a queer look, which expression was still lingering on his face as he passed the three gentlemen.

Charteris was really distressed and anxious to get rid of his companions, so that he could think the matter over. And turning about in his mind how he could excuse himself he saw Guy hail an omnibus and put the girl into it. Then, as he was about to proceed on his walk, he noticed the three gentlemen and hastened eagerly to greet them. There was no shrinking from meeting Charteris's eyes—no embarrassment in Guy's manner, and the earl was satisfied that there was nothing in the affair which could not be explained.

After the introduction to O'More, Charteris said,—

"I was at the Oriental just now, Giulio; I wish to introduce you to an old friend, and that you should go down to Kent with me, if Lord Gray can spare you for a few days."

"Certainly, Straithness, certainly; he need not return until you are willing he should. Don't let us detain you, gentlemen, any longer; au revoir!"

They parted, and Guy and the earl returned to the hotel.

"Your coming to London was a sudden thing, was it not, my lord?"

"No—o," replied Charteris, "I should have come

later positively, and I thought it would do just as well now."

They talked about commonplace affairs until they reached the hotel, when Guy invited the earl to his room. Then he handed him a cigar, took one himself, and, having wheeled an easy-chair before the fire, asked Charteris to be seated. The earl took the offered chair, while Guy leaned carelessly against the mantelpiece.

"Well, what have you been doing with yourself, Giulio, since you left us?" asked Charteris.

"Attending to his lordship's business while he needed me, and after that getting through the spare time as best I could," replied Guy, knocking off the ash of his cigar as he spoke, and so losing the keen look the earl gave him.

"Seeing the world, I suppose," said the latter, laughing.

"Hardly; unless you mean the natural world, or the world of London as seen in the museums, theatres, parks, etc., not the world of men."

It never occurred to Guy to explain to the earl anything with reference to his companion of the morning; it never occurred to him that he had seen her even.

"Well, we will go together to Covent Garden to-night, Giulio, what say you?"

"To-night, my lord? I am sorry, but I have an engagement."

"Can't you break it?"

Guy thought for a moment. He had promised Lizzie Lowry to call at their house that evening, and knew her father would, with the weakness of an invalid, be disappointed if he did not come; besides Wetherby, had told them of Guy's familiarity with the by-ways and odd nooks of the Continent, and Mrs. Lowry was anxious to consult him as to the best place and cheapest they could find to

which to take her husband, whom the doctor had ordered to a milder climate for the rest of the winter, which order could now be obeyed, as the successful play had replenished their exchequer.

"Not very well, my lord; I *could*, but——"

"Never mind, then; when we come back from Kent we will go. Can you start in the 10.45 train to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, easily, since his lordship has furloughed me."

And after a little longer conversation the earl went away, and, hailing a hansom, was driven to his club.

"I wish Giulio had told me about the girl of his own motion, but he certainly did not seem to have any guilty secret. His talk was too unembarrassed, and he did not avoid my eye at any time. Well, I may be deceived in him, but I'll trust him till he proves himself unworthy, and meantime will not act as if I suspected him. I will go to Fernlie to-morrow, and if he is pleased, make out the deeds on my return to London."

So ran Charteris's thoughts as the hansom jolted him over the rough streets.

CHAPTER V.

"HALLOO! Yoicks! Is it Scotland, my boy?" asked one young man, an inmate of a room in the Foreign Office, of another who entered the same. The speaker was a handsome, merry-eyed fellow, who evidently took life easy, and did not allow the duties which kept him at his desk from ten A.M. till four P.M. to wear upon him physi-

cally or mentally. The one to whom he spoke was also a good-looking young man, but he had premature marks of wear about his face that betokened a life of dissipation. He went to his desk and turned over the letters there.

"Scotland it is, my most anxious friend; sorry for you, Leslie, that you haven't an old aunt to coddle you up! Hi! what's the matter with the old lady her hand shakes."

He had been looking at the address of the envelope as he spoke, and now his eyes remained fixed on the delicate characters traced on it, and his face grew sober, thus showing more plainly the lines upon it.

"Why don't you open the letter, Maitland?" asked a third clerk, who had just entered the room and begun to take off his wrappings.

"Why don't you mind your own business?" retorted Maitland, savagely.

"Hoity-toity, we're on our high horse this morning!" replied the new-comer, and before Maitland could reply, a messenger entered and summoned the former from the room.

Maitland dropped into his chair and read his letter, then he sat for awhile with one leg thrown over the arm, swinging his foot and playing with the envelope which lay upon his desk, while his gaze seemed entranced by a spot of ink upon the sheet of blotting-paper which was pinned down over the leather cover.

"Anything serious, Malcolm?" asked Leslie, coming over to him and laying his hand kindly on his shoulder.

"No, I think not; but I'll read the letter, Jack, it will interest you, too.

"'DEAR NEPHEW:—Once more I write to bid you come to the old woman; it may be the last time, boy, for I have had a warning that I am not for long in this world.

Never mind what it was; if I told you you would only laugh at an old woman's superstition; therefore, I will not. But come and bring your friend "Jack" with you. The Yule-log shall be burnt upon Christmas, and the old house be made as gay as possible for you. I love the banks and braes of my native land,—no one better,—but I regret that she neglects this season of peace and good-will so strangely, and have transplanted the English merry-makings at that time to this uncongenial soil. However, you have heard me talk on that subject before: it is old.

"'The folk at the castle are very gay, and Lady Rose the idol of all. The earl has gone to London for a few days. His protégé, Mr. Conway, has been in town some weeks or so, and is expected back with his lordship. Be sure you bring "Jack" with you.

"'Lillie is well, and sends love to you and kind regards to Mr. Leslie.

"'Ever your affectionate aunt,

"'ELIZABETH MAITLAND.'"

"I am much obliged to her for her kind invitation," said Leslie, whose face, somehow, looked ruddier since the reading of that last paragraph.

"And you'll go, of course?"

"Cela va sans dire."

"Well, how comes on the play?"

"But slowly; Lowry fainted in the theatre last night, and I am going there to-night to see him. Will you go? It is their usual 'weekly,' you know."

"Thank you, yes."

Leslie turned to go to his desk, hesitated, then went back to the other's side.

"Maitland, you won't mind my speaking plainly; but I hope you mean all square and honorable there."

Maitland looked up at him quickly. "I don't know that I mean anything, Jack; can't a man admire a pretty face without being called to account?" he replied, testily.

It was nearly nine o'clock that evening when Guy presented himself at the house of the Lowrys. Evidences of the success of the play were shown in the improved habiliments of mother and daughter, whose dresses, though plain and inexpensive, were evidently new, and in the additional comforts gathered around the invalid's chair.

Years before, when fortune's favors were more frequent than they had been lately, Mr. Lowry was in the habit of collecting his friends around him one evening in every week, and this custom had continued in spite of adverse fortunes up to the present time. Lizzie was but a little girl when Jack Leslie, then a youth of eighteen, had been brought by an older friend of both parties to one of these reunions. He had literary aspirations himself, but, fortunately for him, was not obliged, like Mr. Lowry, to depend on the favor of publishers for his support. Finding the family kindly and hospitable, so far as a cordial welcome was concerned, Leslie continued to go, until it came to be a regular thing that Wednesday evening should be spent in Ormond Crescent. And he had been the means of bringing Malcolm Maitland to the house,—a thing he had begun to regret, when he saw Lizzie's eyes brighten at his coming, and her cheeks mount their rosiest hues at mention of his name. Not that he was jealous, for he had never had a thought for the girl warmer than friendship, but he was anxious lest her feelings should become interested where she was only doomed to disappointment.

Guy found about twelve or fourteen persons collected in the parlor when he arrived. Two of them were ladies,

and among the gentlemen were our fellow-clerks of the Foreign Office. Introductions being over, he found his way to Mr. Lowry's side and soon was deep in the discussion of the relative merits of Cannes, Nice, or Bigorre. After sitting with him about half an hour, he rose and sought Mrs. Lowry. He told her his voice was decidedly for the latter place, and advised her to try and induce her husband to give up Cannes for it. Then he went over to Lizzie and asked her to sing, and led her to the piano.

She sang well, having a clear, sweet voice, with good method, and accompanied herself with taste. Music and conversation were the order of these evenings, with nothing in the way of refreshments but a glass of water, and ever since she had been old enough to be in the parlor she had contributed her share of the entertainment by singing and playing. Consequently she had no shyness about doing so.

Guy enjoyed the spicy conversations very much; there were witticisms and sprightly badinage without the least shade of vulgarity. And among those present were several whose names, seen on the title-page of a book, would guarantee its excellence. He was the first to leave, however, having several letters to write before retiring. As soon as he was gone, questions were asked about him; soon it was found that he was the protégé of two influential members of the peerage, the Earl of Straithness and Viscount Gray, and a garbled account of his first meeting with the former, in Venice, was given.

CHAPTER VI.

THE next day the two went down into Kent. Fernlie was a lovely little gem in perfect order, and Guy was so delighted with it that he expressed himself rapturously. Charteris took him all over the estate, introducing to him the steward and one or two of the principal tenants. The house was small, but perfect in its appointments, and stood, as Charteris Manor did, upon an eminence overlooking the sea.

"Have you never resided here, my lord?" asked Guy, as they sat over their wine at dinner.

"No," replied Charteris, "I have not had time; what with my duties in Parliament, at Straithness, and the manor, this little place gets woefully neglected."

"'Tis a pity," said Guy; "what a cosy little nest it would make for a small family."

As he spoke he remembered those with whom he had spent the previous evening, and thought how happy they would be to find themselves here.

After spending two days in going about the neighborhood and making Guy familiar with all the surroundings, they returned to London.

"I am not willing to release you from attendance yet, Giulio," said the earl, as they settled themselves in the railway-carriage; "I want you to go and see an old friend with me this evening, for I must return to Scotland to-morrow."

"I am at your lordship's service as long as you require me," replied Guy.

The old friend was Mr. Upham, who was prepared for the visit by a letter from the earl, but who was not prepared for the face he looked up into when Guy was introduced to him.

Notwithstanding the full long beard, there was a something in the face—in the large, soft, blue eyes and the formation of the brow—which he recognized without being able to place them. He looked bewildered from one to the other of his visitors for an instant before he recovered himself sufficiently to greet the stranger, and Charteris noticed the peculiar manner, but, attributing it to the nervousness of old age, took no further heed of it. Guy was pleased with the old gentleman, and Mr. Upham seemed to take a decided fancy to Guy, and so the visit passed off pleasantly to all.

When the earl parted with Guy that evening he told him they would expect him anxiously at the castle, and look for him as soon as Lord Gray could spare him.

The next day a large business-envelope was handed in to Guy's address at the Oriental, from Mr. Upham—and on opening it, it was found to contain a letter from the earl, and the title-deeds of Fernlie, made in his, Giulio Conway's, name.

Guy's gratitude was sincere, and he immediately wrote to Charteris—and his second thought was for the Lowrys. His engagement with Lord Gray would prevent his occupancy of the house for some time to come; why not place it at their disposal, and so save them the expensive journey to Cannes or Bigorre, and all the necessary extra outlay at such a place? He would consult Wetherby, and, if he approved, lay the matter before the family that very evening.

Wetherby did approve, and together they sought the Lowrys that night. There they found Malcolm Maitland,

who was to start for Scotland the next day. As soon as he had the opportunity Guy made the offer of Fernlie as a substitute for Cannes, and was thanked most gratefully and his offer accepted as freely as it was made. Maitland having left before Guy spoke, he could know nothing of the arrangement. The next day Guy went down to Kent to make ready for his guests, whom Wetherby was to bring down in two days' time.

CHAPTER VII.

AMONG the guests whom the Christmas festivities drew to Straithness were The O'More and Lord Gray; Guy did not accompany his patron, but remained in London a few days longer, to perfect his arrangements with regard to the Lowrys' tenancy of Fernlie. We know that Malcolm Maitland and his friend "Jack" had left London also for "The Evergreens," as Miss Maitland's cottage ornée was called. Miss Maitland had recently become a neighbor of the earl's, being only three miles distant from the castle, but an acquaintance had been formed between the ladies with a mutual liking, consequently she was invited to bring her nephew and his friend to Straithness when they came down.

Lillie Maitland's brown eyes had danced with delight, though shyly veiled with their long lashes, and her cheeks had turned rosy-red and dimpled with smiles when she greeted her brother's companion. As for Jack, he held the little hand in his as if he would have kept it there forever.

The O'More had not been twenty-four hours in the house before he was ready to cast himself at Rose Forrester's feet. He had seen much of the world and of society, and never before had yielded himself captive to woman's charms. And the young baroness could not be seen without being admired by all as she moved among her guardian's guests a very queen. She liked The O'More extremely, charmed by his frank, happy disposition, his ready wit, and pleasing intelligence, and, while she showed that liking, kept him with ready tact from overstepping certain bounds. He could not understand her, knowing that she was not engaged, and, while such a line of conduct only made him love her the more wildly, it caused him to form a very erroneous opinion of her character, and set her down as a flirt.

Rochdale also returned home for the holidays, and it was not many days after his return that, seeing The O'More's devotion and spurred on by jealousy of him and of Guy, he determined to find out what Rose's sentiments towards himself were.

The interview was a stormy one on his side, for Rose assured him that, while she had always felt and always would feel (unless he proved himself utterly unworthy) a warm and sisterly regard for him, further her heart did not carry her. In vain he pleaded and begged, and poured forth upon her his own passionate love—she was not to be moved.

And when at length, stung to madness by her coldness, he taunted her with throwing him over for a perfect stranger or a nameless adventurer, the creature of his father's bounty, she silenced him at once and bade him leave her.

Later he came again and begged her forgiveness, frankly and penitently, for Theo, with all his faults, was naturally

a noble boy, and, knowing he had done wrong, was not ashamed to make the *amende*.

Of course there could be no very warm feeling on his part towards Giulio Conway, who, regretting the circumstance, could not blame the young fellow, and never by word or look resented his behaviour.

The earl, awakened to what was going on by what Margaret had said to him, soon saw the ugly temper which Theo was displaying, and took the first opportunity of showing him the folly of his behaviour. He told him what he had already said to Margaret, that it was not to be expected that Rose would ever care for him more than she did at present. As for his blighted hopes and all that nonsense, he had better wait till the beard was formed upon his chin before he talked in that style, and a few more wholesome if rather unpalatable truths. As for Giulio Conway, Charteris told Theo that, as his father's guest,—an honored and loved guest,—there was a certain respect due him which he was sorry to see his son had failed to show him, and he hoped he would immediately amend his behaviour in this regard.

Never in his life before had the earl spoken thus to his son, and the boy, stung by his father's manner, and burning with a sense of injury from all around him, took refuge in that surest of all refuges for only sons, his mother's arms. Literally; for, throwing himself into them, he sobbed out his accumulated griefs upon her sympathizing breast. But Margaret was a woman of sound sense as well as warm heart, and she knew she could do her boy no greater harm than to encourage his present state of mind. More gently than the earl, but none the less firmly, she repeated in substance what he had said, and led Rochdale at last to see that Rose was not to be won by ill-temper, and that the world was not

all darkness because she refused his suit, and that, although he felt hurt and very unhappy now, he had naturally many years yet to look forward to, and *might* find as great happiness in the future as the present was withholding from him.

So poor Theo went back to college having taken one lesson from life, the bitterest perhaps which the great Master teaches, but one which all must learn—disappointment. But we anticipate.

CHAPTER VIII.

At length a letter was received from Guy, saying he would be at Straithness upon a certain date, and the afternoon of the day on which he was expected, the party from the Evergreens were at the castle. They had been over several times before, and Malcolm expressed himself so warmly in admiration of Rose, that Jack Leslie was thankful poor little Lizzie Lowry was not there to be tormented by her lover's defection, and he also began to fear that her reign over the fickle heart of Maitland was at an end. He knew Maitland had had more than one love-affair, though he knew nothing dishonorable on his part in connection with them, and many a time when he saw what an impression the handsome face had made upon the lonely heart of Lizzie, he feared he had done the poor child more harm than good in bringing them together. Gradually, however, he found that her influence over Malcolm was gaining; he shook off, by degrees, some boon companions who were taking life at a fast and furious rate, he tried to overcome his love of liquor, and in

every way altered for the better. Still, the old habits were very tyrants, and were not willing to relinquish their prey without a struggle, and Lizzie had not triumphed completely yet.

That afternoon the young men (Rochdale was not among them) were collected in the billiard-room knocking the balls about, when some one mentioned Guy's name, and the conversation naturally turned upon him. The billiard-room was separated from the library by a narrow hall, with doors leading into it from each room. It so happened that these doors were open, and that Rose had occasion to go to the library just at this time. She heard "Conway" and "Fernlie" without having her attention particularly drawn, but presently some one said,—

"Oh, Wetherby writes me that the earl has made the fortunate young man a present of Fernlie, and that the first use he makes of the gift is to establish a family there by the name of Lowry, to prevent them from carrying off their pretty daughter to the south of France, the doctors having decided that change of air is necessary for the father."

"Lowry? Did you say Lowry?" asked Maitland, with a strange tightening about the heart.

"That was the name," replied the other.

"Then that must have been the young person I saw him tuck away so carefully into an omnibus just before the earl came up with him one day in the street. The same was the occasion of my introduction to him," remarked The O'More.

"Then Fernlie came just in the nick of time," replied the first speaker.

Rose heard no more. With a strange sickness about her heart she passed with noiseless footsteps up to her own room, and, locking the door, stood for a little while

with her hands pressed to both temples; then she wrung them together and muttered to herself,—

"No—no! There is some explanation—it is not true!" and with a wailing sob threw herself down upon the floor and wept bitter, scalding tears.

That night Guy arrived. The greeting of the earl and countess had all its wonted cordiality, but a change had come over Rose which was very palpable. He was utterly at a loss to account for it, and naturally, when after a day or so he witnessed the devotion of the young Irishman and saw the pleasure Rose showed in his society, assumed that her heart was touched by his evident love and that all hope was over for him.

And poor Rose! In her bewilderment at the shock her faith in Guy had received, she found solace and comfort in the frank, noble nature of O'More, and unconsciously allowed him to see it. And when he did see this change in her manner towards him, and dreamed of all it might mean for him, his happiness knew no bounds.

The careless words spoken over the ivory balls had other fruit, also, but unmixed with evil. When the Maitland party prepared to return to the Evergreens that night Malcolm went up to Jack, and linking his arm in his drew him from Lillie's side, where he had been awaiting the conclusion of the adieux, and said,—

"Old fellow, give up the drive in the moonlight for to-night and walk with me—I'd die if I got into that carriage! Besides, I want to talk to you."

"All right!" replied Jack, and so, after putting the ladies into the landau, he told them he and Malcolm would bid them good-night there and enjoy the moonlight, a good smoke, and a walk all three in one—and, of course, not reach home until long after they had retired. While he was speaking, he rested his hand upon the door;

by the merest accident the carriage-wrap fell over it, and as he ceased, soft fingers were pressed upon his, as the ladies acquiesced in the arrangement and bade the young men good-night.

"Do you believe this story of the Lowrys going to Kent?" asked Malcolm, as they tramped down the avenue.

"I see no reason not to believe it, Malcolm—but I see no reason for uneasiness. Those who have been here longer than we say that Lady Rose's partiality for Conway was very marked, while his devotion to her was patent. He is not a man to throw aside such brilliant prospects for the sake of a few hours of dalliance with Lizzie—and if he had any intention of wronging the girl, he would not have transplanted the whole family to his lair."

"But Lizzie is very beautiful and very confiding—different in every way from this self-sustained, proud baroness," replied Malcolm, with lover-like inconsistency resenting the idea that Guy would *not* see something in her to charm him, at the same time that he was ready to shoot him if he did. "Might not her very childishness attract him, as affording such a contrast to Lady Rose?"

"She is without question a very dear little girl, Maitland, and in every way worthy of your estimation of her—still I do not think she is the sort of woman to win Conway away from his allegiance here; of that you may be sure," said Leslie.

"Well, I guess you are right—you always are, old fellow, and I am never able to settle a question in my own mind until I know what your opinion is! I don't know how I'd get along without you."

Leslie smiled at this, and then a sudden thought seemed

to strike him, and with another smile and a wink, as if he held another self at arms'-length and wanted to see if the joke was understood by both, he laid his hand on Maitland's shoulder and wheeled around to face him in the moonlight.

"If that is the case, old fellow, let me give you a bit of advice. Write to Lizzie to-morrow. Tell her what you have heard to-night and how it has worried you and *why*. Tell her, if she will marry you, you will give up drinking and all evil companions, except Jack Leslie, and settle down for good and all."

"Whew!" was all Malcolm's comment, as he poked holes in the dirt with his cane.

"Don't you really care for her, then?" asked Jack.

"Of course I do—but it's all so sudden! Do give a fellow breathing-time."

"Oh, it's nothing to me—I shall kill you if any harm comes to Lizzie through you—so you can take your choice——"

"Kill me?—harm? Why, old fellow, have you gone mad in the full of the moon?"

"No."

"What do you mean, then?"

"What I say."

"But—but—"

"But me no buts! Be a man, and act as a gentleman, that is all."

"My dear Jack, you are unnecessarily excited. I am very fond of Lizzie—I love her! Will that satisfy you? I love her, as I hope for mercy! That idle talk yonder showed me all at once the true state of my heart, which I can conceal from myself no longer; and if harm came to her, I'd be as ready for the life of the one through whom it came as you could be."

"Then why not tell her so? except for the poverty, she is in every way your equal. Your aunt is not a worldly-minded woman, and so you are happy in your marriage will not require you to look higher for a wife. You love her, yet you cannot give up a few disreputable companions and pleasures for her sake! You are weak and selfish, Maitland, and I blush for you. Folly! Weakness to be wroth with weakness!" he muttered the last to himself as he strode along impatiently. Maitland did not reply for some little while, then he said,—

"You are right as ever, Jack. I have been weak and selfish, but I'll be so no more. I'll write the letter to-morrow; will that satisfy you?"

For answer Jack grasped his hand and wrung it, and the rest of the walk they pursued in silence almost, only a casual remark interrupting it.

When they reached the cottage the lights were all out, and the moon was near her setting, but at one window the curtain had been held aside until the gleam of their cigars indicated their approach along the lane, and the dimmed light served presently to show the two figures approaching the house. When they had disappeared under the portico the curtain was dropped, and Lillie Maitland sought her pillow with a happy smile upon her face.

Guy's Christmas was a miserable one; he could make no advance towards understanding Rose's behaviour, and Theo's undisguised dislike annoyed him exceedingly. He began to feel that the castle was no place for him, and to look forward anxiously to the time fixed by Lord Gray for his departure.

That was the middle of January. Theo had returned to college, the Evergreens had relapsed into its old quietude, only Lillie's sweet eyes had a new light in them,

and a ring sparkled on her finger where none had been before.

Rose remained unapproachable, and so Guy was glad to go, although he left The O'More, his triumphant rival, behind him.

BOOK SEVENTH.

CHAPTER I.

Guy had gone without an opportunity of asking an explanation of Rose's behaviour, or of letting her know his own state of mind. Her farewell to him had been as cool and formal as to Lord Gray, and, remembering the days when she threw her arms around his neck and begged him not to go, although he expected no such childish demonstration now, Guy's heart was heavy enough as he took his place beside his patron in the railway-carriage. But after he was gone, and there was no help for it, Rose began to fear she had jumped too readily to conclusions, and would have given much to have been able to recall the past. She took herself to task for assuming in the first place that Guy's feelings for her were warmer than the familiarly affectionate friendship which had always existed between them justified; he had never told her in so many words that he loved her, but then his actions had betrayed that love very clearly. However, he had never spoken, and so, if he wished to do so, he was honorably free to turn elsewhere.

And had he turned elsewhere? Ought she to have acted upon the gossip of a set of gay young men? Perhaps he was sad and unhappy now, thinking about her, and wondering what had changed her. Poor Giulio! she

had been very cruel and unkind, and would make amends, so far as lay in her power, by sending him a message through one of the earl's letters.

Meantime The O'More was only waiting a fitting opportunity to press his suit, which he felt sure would not be rejected. He had spoken to Charteris, who told him he left Rose entirely free; whom she chose as her husband he would welcome as such, unless, of course, her choice fell upon a thoroughly unworthy party, in which case he would use his influence to disabuse her of her infatuation; but such a thing could not possibly happen, he felt satisfied.

So the earl spoke, secretly wondering what had come between Conway and Rose,—whether that shabby girl he had seen him with had anything to do with it? He was sorry, but as they neither of them had sought his confidence it was not for him to interfere. Neither did Rose go in her perplexity to Margaret. With all a woman's intuition, she saw that the countess was inimical to Guy, and believed him to have interfered with Theo's prospects, and although there was still the same love between them, there could not be the same confidence.

A friend Rose found in Miss Maitland, the "Lillie" of the Evergreens, and they were much together in their walks and rides. Lillie had made Rose her confidante as to her engagement with Jack, and had much to say on the all-engrossing subject, to which Rose was a sympathizing listener, though she did not respond by a confidence of her own perplexity.

One morning the earl received a letter from Lord Gray, stating that he had not been able to start so soon as he expected when he left Scotland, and that Guy had taken advantage of the delay to visit Fernlie.

"He is very busy just now," he added, "and full of

plans for the future, by which two people are to be made very happy."

"So," thought Rose, "it is all settled." She made no comment upon the news, but as soon as she could she locked herself in her own room, and fought down her heart with every weapon her pride could bring to her assistance. When the struggle was over and she thought pride had conquered, she ordered her horse to be saddled, and reappeared habited to mount him. She rode rapidly and long, and the groom, who followed her, expressed it as his opinion that something had happened to very seriously upset her ladyship, or she wouldn't have punished Selim so. On her return she passed the Maitlands' cottage, and Lillie, seeing her coming, ran down to the gate to greet her. Had it not been for disappointing her friend, and that Selim, so used to stopping at the gate, could not be made, without considerable of a struggle, to understand that he was not to do so now, she would have turned down a lane she came to before she reached the Evergreens, and which was a shorter cut to the castle.

Lillie had a great deal to tell. Malcolm was to be married early in March, and she was to be bridesmaid. He had sent a photograph of his fiancée to his sister, and she held it up for Rose's inspection. It was, as we know, a pretty, sweet face, and Rose said so. If she had only asked the name, how quickly the clouds that hung over her heart would have been dispelled! She asked no questions, however, only assented to its being a sweet picture.

"Why, what have you been riding so hard for, Lady Rose? Poor Selim is covered with foam."

"Is he?" replied Rose, for the first time noticing the horse, who was moving his head restlessly and working

the bit. "Well, we must get home, Selim, and you'll have a rest. Good-by, Lillie."

"Won't you dismount?"

But Rose declined doing so, and went on to meet her fate.

She had not gone far when a figure at the turn of the road attracted her attention, and a second glance told her it was The O'More. In a moment she knew what it meant, but did not check Selim's pace until they met. With one instant retrospection of the situation, she as quickly made up her mind what her reply would be. If Guy was "making two people happy," why should she not do the same? She had liked the man who was walking towards her very much as a friend; there was no reason why she should not teach herself to love him as her husband.

O'More was more nervous than she by far, when he saw her coming so close upon him. She drew Selim in and made some commonplace remark about the weather. He went up to her, laid his hand on the reins without replying to her, and said,—

"Please send the groom home, Lady Rose, I—I—will walk beside you, if you will allow me."

For one moment Rose hesitated. If she refused he would understand her, and she would be safe; but why need she refuse? He was quick to see the hesitation, and glanced up at her with such a startled, beseeching look in his eyes, and his face turned so pale, that she acted in an instant, and told the groom she would need his services no longer. As the man rode off she began playing with Selim's silvery mane, and waited. The words she expected came at last, manly and to the point, and when she reached the castle she was The O'More's promised wife.

"You will be down presently, my darling?" he asked,

as, having entered the hall together, she turned towards the staircase—"you won't be any longer than you can help?"

"No,—no longer than I can help," replied Rose, giving him her hand, which he raised to his lips and kissed twice passionately before he released it.

She mounted the first flight, but turned when she reached the landing, and looked smilingly down upon him standing where she had left him; then, kissing her fingers lightly to him, she disappeared along the passage leading to her own room.

Once safe in the sanctity of that refuge, if the man who was walking up and down the drawing-room thinking of her, and so restless in his great happiness that he could do nothing but roam about whistling snatches of operas and counting the minutes until she reappeared, could have seen the change which came over her, how far, far differently the world would have looked to him!

For the light of excitement faded from her eyes, the carnations from her cheeks, and she stood there wringing her hands together while her white teeth were drawing crimson drops from the tender lips. Wringing her hands and moaning over the rashness that had brought her into this miserable situation from which in honor she could see no salvation. She shivered in her misery, and crouched down on the rug before the fire and remained, she knew not how long, gazing into the coals, but seeing nothing. At length the voice of Lady Margaret, speaking to some one in the hall, roused her, and she was surprised to find how late it was. She rang for her maid and began to prepare for dinner, as it was so late she would not care to dress again. She wore the blue silk which she had on that evening at Worthington, and Guy's gold ornaments. The maid noticed nothing particular in her lady's man-

ner, for before she rang Rose had schooled herself to calmness. When she was dressed she descended to the drawing-room, and seeing no one there, walked over to one of the windows and stood in its deep embrasure, the curtain falling behind her. But she was not alone, as she supposed, for O'More had thrown himself upon a lounge at the other end of the apartment and had seen her enter. He followed her, as he had a right, and, throwing back the curtain, stood at her side. She was resting her forehead against the window-sash, and though she saw him beside her, made no movement. He put his arm around her, and, turning her face up to him, kissed her lips; a shudder passed over her, still she did not resist; she knew she belonged to him now, not to herself; but as he drew her more closely towards him and murmured words of loving tenderness in her ear, she rested her head upon his breast and gave way to her overladen heart by a flood of tears.

CHAPTER II.

When the earl and countess were informed of Rose's engagement to The O'More, they were considerably astonished, but as it had been their rule never to interfere, and they had received no confidence in the matter, they, of course, made no remarks. That very day, Charteris had begun a letter to Guy, and he hesitated about telling him the news; he began to do so, then changed his mind and allowed the letter to go with the unfinished sentence scratched over.

Meantime Guy, finding Lord Gray would not leave

England until the middle of March, and having no desire to return to Scotland only to endure again the pain of seeing his rival's happiness, busied himself about Fernlie, where the Lowrys still were. Malcolm Maitland's engagement to Lizzie being told him, he joined with the lover in pressing an early marriage, and suggested that it should take place at Fernlie, before he and Lord Gray left. There was no reasonable objection to be made, and so it was arranged.

An invitation was, of course, sent to Scotland, and Mrs. Maitland and Lillie prepared for their journey to London. A few days before she left, the latter came over to see Rose, full of the one subject so important to her uneventful life. She had had a little note informing her of Rose's engagement, and had offered her congratulations as in duty bound; had seen Rose several times since, and thought that for a newly-engaged young lady, before whom the world lay painted in such brilliant colors, she was very quiet, and, if it were not utterly impossible, she would say, sad. But when she asked Rose if she were happy, the answer was so positively "*yes!*" that she was forced to be satisfied and keep her wonderment to herself.

So now she was going to London to be bridesmaid at Malcolm's wedding, and wasn't it good and kind of Mr. Conway?

"What?" asked Rose, starting at the familiar name.

"Why, to have the wedding at Fernlie, his beautiful place, you know," replied Lillie.

"No—I don't know what you mean, Lillie. I did not know your brother and—and Mr. Conway were intimate."

"Neither were they until a little while ago. You know Lizzie's parents were—well, were very poor, through her

father's losing all he had invested in some shares that went up or down, or something,—then his publishers failed,—and then, he wrote a play, and his health failed, and no one wanted his play, until the manager of Covent Garden took it—and it was a success," etc., all through what the reader already knows. Rose listened with a strange dread fastening at her heart, and when the story was finished, managed to ask,—

"And Lizzie—has she a sister?"

"No," replied Lillie, "she is an only child. But, good God! Lady Rose, what is the matter?"

For Rose Forrester had fallen off her chair and lay upon the floor in a dead faint.

The wedding at Fernlie was a delightful affair to all interested. Lillie and Jack were as happy as two mortals could be, and their felicitous state was only surpassed by that of the bride and groom.

Although several letters had come from Scotland, no word had come to Guy of Rose's engagement, and it was from Lillie's lips he heard it. They were standing at the front door, watching the carriage which contained the happy couple disappear down the road, when Lillie said,—

"This time to-morrow you will be watching aunty and me over the same road. Shall I carry your best wishes and congratulations to our bonny baroness?"

"Congratulations?" queried Jack Leslie thoughtlessly.

"Why, have you not heard of the engagement?" she asked in surprise. Fortunately she was looking at her lover, and so did not see how pale Guy turned. He clung to the iron railing, while his head swam and his lips turned white and dry. There was a buzzing in his ears so that the voices of the two standing next to him sounded a mile away, and though he heard their voices he had no idea of what they said. Presently there was a silence,

and he found himself alone. Leslie had caught sight of the agony in his face, and had drawn Lillie quietly away. But Jack was afraid to leave him alone; they had only gone out of his sight, not where they could not see him. Anxiously they watched him turn and stagger, rather than walk, into the house and up the stairs with the heavy step of an old man. He reached his room, locked the door, and then there was a fall upon the floor. When they forced the door and entered the apartment, he was lying just where he had fallen, totally insensible.

The next day he left England.

CHAPTER III.

It was September before Guy again saw the shores of England. In the spring Lord Gray found he would be obliged to go to Constantinople, thence probably to St. Petersburg. As soon as they arrived in the old imperial city, his patron gave Guy a month in which to visit his mountain home, and thither he gladly betook himself.

What a contrast was that peaceful sylvan scene to the turmoil and bustle, the babble and dirt, of the Turkish town! How like an old friend seemed each well-remembered landmark! Inside the monastery there was little change. His two old friends were there, and happy to greet once more the child of their affections. Father Anselmo looked rather more broken than when he was there last, Guy thought, but the face was as glorious in its angelic beauty as when first he remembered it; more beautiful, perhaps, with the reflection of the coming glory of the heavenly rest to which he was drawing near. Guy

spent two quietly happy weeks at the monastery, and seemed to renew his childhood. He seemed to have left his manhood, with all worldly cares, dreams, plans, and aspirations, all disappointments and sorrows, outside the walls, and once more he was a boy, following Father Anselmo about in his daily avocations, or curled up on a bench in the organ-loft dreaming vague dreams as the organist drew weird and solemn harmonies or soft, low melodies from the instrument.

When the time for his departure came and he had taken leave of all, Father Anselmo followed him out to the monastery gate. Guy bade his old friend farewell sadly, for he felt it was probably a last leave-taking. The monk, too, seemed to have the same thought, for the hand he laid upon Guy's shoulder trembled more than age would have caused it to, and his eyes were dim.

"God bless you, my boy, in all things, and keep you! May you be happy and successful; but oh, Guy, remember that the world is not everything; forget not the hereafter in the present, and that it shall profit nothing to have gained all things here if your soul is lost in eternity. I never expect these old eyes to rest upon your face again, my son, but you are never forgotten in my prayers; and remember, if the world frowns,—for it is a fickle mistress,—if your high ambitions are disappointed, if friends turn cold who now are seemingly sincere, your home is always here. The monastery gates are always open to you, and in its calm retreat your wounded spirit may find its balm."

As he finished speaking the old man took him in his arms and embraced him, kissing him on both cheeks. Guy could not speak, but he raised the monk's hands to his lips and turned away with a gesture of farewell. A little distance down the mountain he paused and looked back. Once more the setting sun was illuminating the gray stone

walls, bringing out in strong relief the legend cut above the gate, and flooding the white robes of the old man who stood in it with a golden glory. Guy waved his hand, and turned to continue his walk.

Before him lay the Adriatic in the distance, all impurpled and golden with the last rays of the setting sun; a mist was rising among the mountains and the hills covered with their olives and vines, and here and there was heard the tinkle of a bell or the call of the herdsman collecting his flocks. How little he thought, as he drank in the beauty of the scene, under what circumstances he would look upon it again, or what the near future had in store for him!

He had not written often to his friend, the earl. If he could he would gladly have broken off all connection with the past, and flown to the shores of the New World for the Lethean waters. But that seemed impossible, and here he was on the eve of returning to the scenes of his happiness, the associations of a time so full of hope.

It was September when he again found himself in London, and almost the first acquaintance he met was The O'More. He was just leaving his club as Guy entered (they were fellow-members), and stopped to speak in the vestibule. The two men had never liked each other, and now Guy felt as if he hated him. But there was nothing of the triumphant rival in O'More's manner during the few moments they were together. On the contrary, his usual bonhommie was all gone, his eyes were heavy, and his whole manner preoccupied and sad. Guy was at a loss to account for it.

The next visit he paid, on leaving the club, was to Malcolm Maitland's snug little villa, in St. John's Wood. There he was sure of a kind and sincere welcome, and of being made at home at once. There, too, he would be

apt to hear news he longed for yet dreaded, and would not be obliged to ask any questions to obtain it.

As he was carried to his destination, he looked out of the window of his hansom at the familiar streets, and wondered if he was the same man who, a few months ago, had returned to England so full of hope and high aspirations, and if this was the same London. Now his heart was dead within him, he had no plan for the future, —no hope,—nothing. It mattered not to him whether the sun shone or the rain fell, whether peace reigned over the world or the nations were arming for the strife, nothing could affect him any more.

He had been expecting to hear of the time for the marriage of the Baroness Worthington, and wondered why it was delayed so long; but even that intelligence could have no pain for him now, he thought.

Was it the same Guy who, an hour after, sprang into the cab with such an elastic step, and waved a joyous good-by to the Maitlands, telling the driver to carry him back to his hotel as fast as his horses' feet could move?

Yes, it was the same.

CHAPTER IV.

It was some time before Lady Rose could be recovered from her fainting fit, and when she did come to herself she was seriously ill. The O'More had intended leaving for Ireland the next week; now he lingered until Rose could see him, and he could be sure she was getting well. That time, however, was long coming; not that Rose was seriously ill so long, but she put off the interview as often

as she could find a pretext for doing so, and she kept closely to her own apartments for days after she was well enough to leave them. This singular behavior puzzled Margaret not a little. Indeed, the young girl, heretofore so open and outspoken, so bright and happy, had been a puzzle to the countess for some time in her changed demeanor. But when day followed day, and she still persisted in avoiding her lover, Margaret began to be uneasy, and fear perhaps her mind was affected.

The earl had been obliged to go to London some time before Rose was declared convalescent, and he expected the ladies to follow him as soon as the younger one was able to travel. He wrote now, urging their coming, and Margaret was anxious to obey him, but Rose could not be induced to call herself well. Margaret was almost at her wits' ends, when matters were brought to a head by The O'More. He had been humble enough and sued for Rose's consent to see him, until he was wearied by her persistent refusal; and now urgent business called him to Ireland and he could not delay.

He wrote a note to Rose, asking once more to see her, telling her again in manly words of his love for her—and reminding her that she had promised to be his wife, and therefore he had a *right* to *demand* an interview. He must leave for Ireland that night, and insisted upon seeing her—*unless*—unless a change had come over her feelings and she had ceased to love him, or discovered that she never had loved him! In that case, a word from her would be enough—he would not blame her—only his own rashness is not waiting until she knew him better—but would go away loving her as he could love no other woman in this world and praying always for her happiness.

Lady Margaret was the bearer of this note, and Rose read it with streaming eyes, and a wild thought in her

heart that she could save herself by sending him away. But he—had she any right to break his heart because her own was broken? Did she not owe it to him, so noble and generous, to immolate herself for his sake whom she had deceived so cruelly?

Ah, Rose—Rose—the punishment of your sin is heavy!

"Will you write your answer, Rose, or shall I tell him you will see him?" asked Margaret, after waiting for some time for Rose to speak. The latter sat with the note in her hand—her eyes fixed upon the lines; at the countess's voice, she started and looked up.

"Did you speak, Lady Margaret?" she asked.

"Yes, Rose—I am waiting for your answer."

"My answer?—Oh, yes—my answer! Oh, God help me, how can I answer it!" She threw her arms up over her head wildly, then buried her face in her hands and rocked herself to and fro.

"My poor darling!" exclaimed Margaret, kneeling beside her and gathering the quivering form closely into her motherly arms. "My poor darling, let me help you—tell me what it is."

"No—no—no!" replied Rose wildly, pushing her away from her. "No one can help me—I cannot tell you—only go! leave me, please—for God's sake, or I'll go mad!"

Lady Margaret rose from her knees and stood for a few seconds looking at the bowed form before her, then she picked up the note which had fallen to the floor. The rustling of the paper caught Rose's ear, and she looked up.

"Give it to me," she cried, "give it to me! He must be answered, mustn't he?"

"Yes," said Margaret.

"Tell him," said Rose, rising to her feet, steadying herself by the table, and speaking very slowly, "to give

me just half an hour, and then he shall have his answer. Let me be alone for that time." She turned as she finished speaking and looked out of the window, nor did she move until Lady Margaret left the room and closed the door behind her.

Half an hour after the following note was put into The O'More's hands:

"Go—forget me if you can—forgive me if you will—but go! I have been very wicked, and deserve your scorn and that of all good people. For I have lied to you in letting you think I loved you. I never did—when you held me in your arms and rained your kisses on my lips and cheeks I fairly loathed you! But I thought I was stronger than I am, and that I could carry out the lie to the end—I cannot. Go and forget me. You are noble and good and true; and some woman worthy of your goodness and truth will bless your home yet—I am not that woman."

As soon as The O'More left, Rose was anxious to get to London, and there was no further delay in leaving Scotland. The season was at its height when they arrived, and there was to be a drawing-room the very next week, at which she must be presented, if at all this season, as it was to be the last.

At first, after breaking her engagement, Rose was feverishly excitable for some time, and dashed into all kinds of amusements with a zest she had never shown before. The drawing-room passed, and after it the name of the Baroness Worthington was on all lips and London "raved" about her. But the excitement was passing off, and poor Rose was beginning to feel a remorse of conscience as to her treatment of her lover. The O'More had been so generous and gentle, so manly and so loving, she felt very guilty; still, it was better the blow should come early—

that he should know before marriage, and suffer from the knowledge, rather than find out after, what would have killed him. Thus Rose tried to reason with herself, and, gradually growing calmer, took her place in society with her former quiet dignity.

Many a noble and titled name, many a princely fortune, was laid at her feet; many a noble heart swelled with hope of winning her—in vain. She had but one answer for all.

Up to the period of her majority, she had resided almost entirely with her guardian and his wife; but now she was beginning to be more self-reliant, and having secured a pleasant *dame de compagnie* she visited her Irish estates, and after spending a month or two at Worthington in quiet retirement that summer, set about regulating her household at the Towers, where she was when Guy returned to England.

Such in substance was the intelligence the Maitlands imparted to Guy during that eventful visit to St. John's Wood.

He had found a letter from Charteris waiting for him at his club, which he pocketed unread before going to St. John's Wood. On his way back to his hotel, he tore the envelope hastily open and devoured the contents.

The earl pressed him to come to Devonshire as soon as possible; there were several visitors at the Manor, as well as at the Towers, and Rochdale would be at home—and every one was most anxious to see him.

Every one? Yes, every one—for there was a line at the end of the letter worth all the rest; and it ran thus:

"Welcome to England and home!—Rose."

Need we say it was not many hours before Guy was on his way to Charteris?

CHAPTER V.

It was evening when Guy arrived at Charteris. He was expected, and as soon as he gave his name the servant conducted him to a room ready prepared for him, where the earl hastened to welcome him.

It had been too dark to see the park as he drove through it, or the river, or any of the outward beauties of the place; yet as soon as he crossed the threshold into the wide tessellated hall, and glanced around him, a strange sensation came over him—one of those experiences which are almost indescribable.

The scene was familiar with a fleeting, dreamy, far-off familiarity that he could not hold long enough to place: as if he had passed through one of those instants of suspension of all thought or idea,—if such a state can be,—and returned to himself to feel that his present experience was a repetition of something gone through before—though when or how he knew not. The same dreamy feeling followed him up the broad staircase and through part of the upper halls, but when he turned into a side passage he lost it in a measure, and the room into which he was ushered had nothing in it to recall it. It was in fact in a part of the house which in Clare's lifetime had been closed, and Guy had probably never set foot in it before.

There were assembled in the drawing-room, not only the guests of the Manor, but those also of the Towers, with several neighboring families. Our old friends the rector and Mrs. Halstead, and Dr. and Mrs. Bonnycastle,

were there—a little older in face and fuller in figure perhaps—with many gray hairs where once there were but few or none—in all other things unchanged.

With the strange faces we have little or nothing to do. Rose was there, and hanging over her in most lover-like fashion was Theodore, Lord Rochdale. She had just replied to something he had said, and held out her hand for a flower he was playing with, which he kissed before presenting to her—when a movement near the door caused her to raise her eyes to meet those of Giulio Conway fixed upon her as he stood on the threshold beside the earl. There was a reproach in the glance he gave her she did not understand, as he advanced into the room to pay his respects to Lady Straithness. Margaret was at the far end of the apartment and had not noticed his entrance at first, but when she did recognize him she came forward very cordially and welcomed him kindly to England and to Charteris. They had met only a few paces from the ottoman where Rose and Rochdale were sitting; the latter came forward to add his greeting to his mother's, but for a few moments Rose did not move—she was trembling so she feared to trust herself upon her feet. Then just as she was about to rise, she heard the well-known voice beside her:

"Has Lady Worthington no welcome for an old friend?"

An unaccountable shyness took possession of her; she could not even raise her eyes as she made some reply, which sounded even to her own ears strangely commonplace and formal. She felt Guy draw back, knew he was looking at her in pained bewilderment; but she was powerless to break the spell, and would have given worlds if she could have found herself alone, so she could relieve her heart by a good womanly cry.

Then the earl came and took Guy away to introduce him to the rest of the company, and Rochdale resumed his place and his lover-like *empressement*, but Rose scarcely heard what he said or knew what her replies were. She did not raise her eyes, yet the very lids seemed transparent, and she was conscious of every movement Giulio Conway made. She heard his voice as in a dream, while he answered the questions put to him, and gave some detailed account of his travels. She felt that his eyes were frequently turned towards her with a mute appeal and reproach, yet she could give no reassuring or answering glance.

At last Guy's indignation seemed roused; his voice was louder, and took another key. She felt that he was angry, and this gave her courage to rouse herself. She looked up, and found he was standing beside the earl in conversation with Sir Thomas Findlay, and as she let her eyes rest on the tall, lithe, graceful figure, she was struck by a resemblance she had never noticed before between him and the earl. Their profiles were both turned to her. Guy's long, heavy beard of course concealed a portion of his face, and the earl shaved all but his moustache, which was quite gray now, though heavy and long; thus both their mouths were concealed, but it was not so much the features, for we know Guy had Clare's eyes and brow, but the contour of the figure and the *pose*. As she looked, Guy, who had been threading his fingers through his beard, turned towards the earl and tossed back his hair from his forehead with a gesture she had seen Straithness use time and again. So intent was she in noting these resemblances that her eyes rested long and fixedly upon Guy. Either he felt, by that subtle magnetism we have all experienced, that she was looking at him, or he chose that time to notice what she was doing. Suddenly he

turned and looked full at her. Their eyes met for the second time that evening. There was a reproachful questioning in his which caused her to lower hers, and sent the warm blood up over neck and forehead. Provoked at herself, she frowned impatiently and turned away.

Just then a young lady, followed by Margaret, hurried up to the earl. "Oh, my lord," she exclaimed, "we have made out such a nice plan for amusement, and it only wants your consent to be carried out. Say you'll give it. Now, please do."

"My dear Miss Emma, if you will tell me what the plan is, I dare say my consent will not be withheld; but I certainly cannot give it till I know."

"Oh, didn't I tell you! Well, they are to be just like Lady Flora Lee's, and there's a room next the billiard-room which will do for a stage,—only there is no communication with it,—but Mr. Jerningham says it is only a lath and plaster partition which can be easily knocked down. So please say yes, Lord Straithness; Lady Margaret approves."

"But, my dear young lady, you haven't yet told me why the tearing down of my ancestral walls is so imperatively necessary all of a sudden."

"Why, private theatricals, of course; don't you remember how nice it was at Lady Flora's? It's so fashionable now to have them, and they are *so* pleasant! Now do say yes, my lord."

"Yes, with all my heart, so far as the theatricals are concerned; but why must the old walls be torn down? Why not make the stage in the billiard-room?"

"That would leave very little room for the audience; besides, Mr. Jerningham says that passage that leads along to the smoking-room is three or four steps higher than the

billiard-room, and the room we want is on a level with that passage, and Lord Rochdale says——"

"Well, as you seem to have it all arranged, I suppose your asking me was simply a *façon de parler.*"

"Of course we could *do* nothing without asking you, we could only talk and plan. Lady Margaret said she knew you would consent."

"So you are one of the conspirators, Pearl?"

"I could see no objection, Guy; indeed, I think it will be very pleasant."

"So do I. We must try and outdo even Lady Flora Lee. So I give you carte blanche, and the interfering wall shall disappear to-morrow."

"Oh, my lord, how kind! Is it not delightful, Mr. Conway? Did you ever take part in private theatricals?" The young lady turned towards Guy.

"Oh, yes, Miss Everson, several times."

"And you can act?"

"A second Kean,—Macready,—Booth,—though I say it, who should not. Modesty would restrain me, but a regard for the truth forces me to speak it at all times and in all places."

"Oh, I know it is true. I need not have asked. You look as if you could act a part admirably."

"Rather a dubious compliment, Miss Everson," said Guy.

"Why? Oh, I didn't mean anything, and you know I didn't."

Some further badinage passed between them, all of which Rose from her ottoman could hear. At last some one asked her to sing, and she rose and went to the piano.

"Where is your flute, Guy?" asked the earl.

"Up-stairs, my lord, but please don't ask for it to-

night. I'm not 'i' the vein.'" He spoke in low tones, as Rose had begun to sing.

"Well, we'll excuse it to-night, but no longer. And now, Miss Emma, who are to compose your company, and what is the play to be?"

"Oh, we have thought of several: 'Still Waters,' and 'Rosedale,' and 'She Stoops to Conquer,' and 'The Hunchback.' We haven't made up our minds yet. Mr. Jerningham thinks 'The Hunchback' too much for amateurs to undertake. I wanted it to be 'Plot and Passion,' but he thinks that as objectionable as 'The Hunchback,' but I like it; only there are but two lady characters. Mr. Jerningham——"

"Mr. Jerningham is stage-manager?" asked the earl demurely, with a twinkle in his eye.

Miss Everson blushed slightly, but continued: "Oh, Mr. Jerningham knows all about private theatricals. He has played so often, and then he goes to the theatre so much, and knows Boucicault and—and——"

"Oh, well, I presume he is competent. At any rate you have my best wishes for your success, and you may command me in all things," said the earl, turning away with Margaret. Rose had finished her song, and was leaving the piano.

"Oh, isn't he just as good as he can be! Oh, Lady Rose, you'll take part, won't you? Come over here and let us talk about it. It is perfectly delighful!"

Rose, thus called upon, could not but join the group, which had lost the earl, but gained Mr. Jerningham, who approached to learn the success of Miss Everson's mediation.

"So his lordship consents, I judge by your face, Miss Everson," said Mr. Jerningham.

"Consents? Indeed he does; he is the dearest man,

—a perfect—you know what I mean,—it's very slangy, I know, but it's just the word."

"A perfect brick, I suppose you mean," said Guy.

"Yes, that's the word, I knew it was something: now isn't he?" exclaimed Miss Everson.

"We all agree upon that verdict, Miss Everson," said Mr. Jerningham. "Shall we call the culprit over here, and inform him of it?"

"What play have you decided upon, Miss Everson?" asked Rose.

"Oh, none, as yet; nor the players. You'll help, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, if I can."

"You can, of course. Here's Mr. Conway willing, and Mr. Jerningham, and I. Now we must hunt up some more. Come, Mr. Jerningham, let us beat up recruits. Lord Straithness says it must surpass Lady Flora's affair. Au revoir, friends; remember you must be on hand when called for. By the by," she continued, turning back, "if we play 'Still Waters,' and can get one more gentleman, our company is made up. Mr. Conway, you'd make a good Captain Hawkesly, and Lady Rose for the Aunt; but we'll see about it." And the gay couple turned away, leaving Rose and Guy to a most uncomfortable tête-á-tête.

"Do you find much time for practice now, Lady Worthington?"

"Oh, yes, it is such a pleasure, and we generally find time for that, you know——"

"Conway, you haven't forgotten how to sing, have you?" asked Lord Rochdale, joining them.

"No, my—Theo, I have not, but——"

"Oh, no excuse, Mr. Conway!" exclaimed a lady, who was passing at the moment and heard the question. "'But me no buts.' I have heard *of* your singing, and always

wanted so much to have an opportunity of enjoying the treat I know you can give us. Now don't refuse, must he, Lady Rose?"

"Mr. Conway is always obliging," replied Rose, playing with her fan.

Guy looked at her, but she did not raise her eyes. "Then I cannot refuse," said he, going towards the piano.

He played a short prelude, and then struck a few chords that caused Rose to start and color violently. It was the beginning of a song he had composed some years before, and sang under her window one night at Straithness. It was the same night, Rose remembered, on which they had talked of vicarious sacrifices, and of the different degrees of endurance possessed by men and women.

Guy sang:

The winds are all hushed and the moon is high,
  Like a queen on her silver throne;
Tranquil and dusk the woodlands lie,
Scarcely a cloud sails over the sky;
None are awake save the stars and I,
  Sleepest thou still, mine own?

The song of the nightingale stirs the air,
  And the breath of the brier is blown;
Come forth in thy beauty beyond compare,
I'll clasp thee close and I'll call thee fair,
And I'll kiss off the dew from thy golden hair;
  Sleepest thou still, mine own?

As he finished singing he turned around on the stool, but Rose was at the other end of the room speaking to Lady Margaret.

"That was very sweet, Mr. Conway; I never heard the words before," said Lady Clara Leicester. "Do you know the author?"

"Yes, very well, Lady Clara; he is a friend of mine."

"And the air, so soft and sweet, just suited for a serenade. Is that original, too?"

"Yes; the words and air have the same author, but—"

"Oh, don't get up!" exclaimed her ladyship; "please sing some more. Your voice is a very rich baritone; just the kind of voice I delight in."

So Guy turned to the piano again, and sang some words of L. E. L.'s, set to a simple air;

"Ah! tell me not that memory
Sheds gladness o'er the past;
What is recall'd by faded flowers,
Save that they did not last?
Were it not better to forget,
Than but remember with regret?

"Look back upon your hours of youth,
What were your early years
But scenes of childish cares and griefs?
And say not childish tears
Are nothing; at that time they were
More than the young heart well could bear.

"Go on to riper years, and look
Upon your sunny spring,
And from the wrecks of former years
What will your memory bring?
Affections wasted, pleasures fled,
And hopes now numbered with the dead."

"I am very much obliged, Mr. Conway," said Lady Clara, as Guy finished. "I should beg for another, only it is so late, and I see Lady Rose is mustering her forces for a return to the Towers. I suppose we will see you across the river to-morrow?"

"It is probable," replied Guy.

"Yes, you must come. Good-night. Yes, Lady Rose, I'm ready."

Rose had joined them, intending to ask Lady Clara if it were not time to think of getting home. She then turned to Guy and held out her hand timidly.

"Good-night, Mr. Conway. I shall be glad to welcome you to the Towers as soon as you find it convenient to cross the bridge."

Words of course, but they cost Rose a painful effort, and were said in such an indifferent manner that Guy was angered more than ever, and merely bowed his thanks, as he held her hand for a moment, then let it drop.

When Rose found herself in her own room she dismissed her maid very soon, and then sat at the window lost in thought. She was angry at herself for the silly part she had played, and for hurting Guy's feelings so deeply. She told herself she could have been reserved, without being so icily cold. What must he think of her? How did he feel? Those songs were for her, she knew; she had never heard him sing the serenade in company before. It was the nearest approach he had ever made towards playing the lover, and the nights when he had sung it to her at Straithness had been such blissful ones! As she sat there thinking, she imagined she saw a figure approach the house from the bridge; yes, there it was moving under the trees. Her heart told her it was Guy, and she did not need the sight she had of him a moment after, as he stood where the moonlight fell upon him, to convince her.

CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning after breakfast, Margaret asked Guy if he did not wish to walk around the grounds. Rochdale joined them, and Guy was struck with the improvement the last year had wrought in the boy. He was not only more manly in appearance but in mind, and had lost that flippancy of manner which had formerly characterized him. They walked slowly down through the park under the grand old trees, then around the house to the terrace at the back. As he stood on the terrace and looked down the slight declivity to the river, the same dreamy sensation of having been there before came over him. He tried to shake it off, but could not, and it was only by an effort that was actually painful he could listen and make suitable replies to Lady Margaret's remarks. They took the path leading to the bridge, and Rochdale led them a little farther down to show Guy his new boat and boat-house. The latter was built a considerable distance down the river, very far from the site of the old one, and Theo's boat was a perfect little gem.

"Do you know, Conway," said he, springing into the light craft and rocking it to and fro, "that father will not step foot in the 'Sea-foam,' nor let mamma nor Rose do so either. It is a real shame when she is such a beauty, and 'walks the waters like a thing of life!' But you'll go with me, I hope."

"Certainly I will, my lord," replied Guy.

"Then this afternoon we'll take a sail," said Theo, coming out of the house.

"Some day, Theo dear, you will understand why your father refuses to allow us to share your boating pleasures, and will take no part in them himself; he has good reasons," said Lady Margaret. "And now," she continued, "let us return to the bridge, and show Giulio the way to the Towers. We will find Rose and her friends through breakfast by this time."

When they reached the middle of the bridge, they paused to look down the river. It was a very pretty view, the trees on the further side diminished in number so that a glimpse of the sea could be had through their leafy covers. Looking up the river, the view was more circumscribed, as the bend was very abrupt only a short distance above; and as he turned in that direction again the bewildering dreaminess came over Guy, and he shook himself impatiently.

"The air off the water is chilly this morning," said Lady Margaret, drawing her breakfast-cape more closely about her; "I am sorry you did not bring your tartan, Giulio."

"That would have been too heavy, Lady Margaret," he replied; "I do not think I shall suffer from the cold." But he shivered again, and drew his coat closer together and buttoned it across the breast.

They found the party at the Towers collected in Rose's morning-room, and the matutinal salutations were hardly over before Miss Everson returned to the subject they had been discussing by exclaiming,—

"Oh, Mr. Conway, the play is decided upon; it is to be 'Rosedale,' and you are to be Elliot Gray; Mr. Jerningham, Matthew Leigh; Sir Thomas Findlay will be Colonel May; and we have still to find some one who can act the villain, and that farmer—I forget his name. Major Gillette says he will provide the soldiers,—real

soldiers, you know,—and then we must find people for the gipsies. As for the ladies, Lady Rose is Rosa Leigh; Lady Clara is to be Lady Adela Gray; I'm Lady Florence, and I don't know who we can get to take the part of Tabitha Stork, and that unkempt servant-girl."

The young lady paused to take breath, and Guy replied, "I fear, Miss Everson, you will be disappointed in Elliot Gray; I——"

"You don't mean to say you won't take the part?"

"By no means; only that I will not do justice to it."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of that. Of course you have seen the play?"

"Yes, I have seen, while in New York, the author in the part of Elliot, hence my hesitancy," he replied, glancing at Rose, who was looking at him, but who turned away as soon as his eye met hers. Rochdale at that moment threw himself into an easy-chair at her side, and began to talk to her in a low tone. Guy bit his lips and turned away.

"In New York! why, didn't Dion Boucicault write it?" exclaimed Miss Everson.

"Dear me, no, Emma!" exclaimed Lady Clara, "it was written by an American, a Mr. Wallace——"

"Wallack, Lady Clara, pardon me," interrupted Guy; "Lester Wallack, of New York, one of the most finished actors on the American stage,—although an Englishman by birth,—particularly in melodramatic characters."

"Oh, well!" returned Miss Everson, "Dion Boucicault has written so many plays, that one may be pardoned for being ignorant of what he has *not* written."

They still continued to discuss the play and the players, while Rochdale sat by Rose and spoke only to her, and then only in so low a tone no one but she could hear a word. Rose began to be annoyed at his persistence, and

colored with impatience. But Guy, who was furtively watching her, attributed her emotion to other causes, and his heart sank within him.

Miss Everson could think of nothing, talk of nothing, but the play, and finally the company adjourned to the Manor, to see what progress the carpenters had made in the demolition of the wall. They found the opening made and the room thick with the dust and dirt. The billiard-tables were protected by their coverings, and removing these they began to knock the balls about under pretense of teaching the ladies the game. Several of the earl's guests joined them, and, ignoring the dirt, they spent a merry morning.

After lunch Rochdale reminded Guy of his promise to sail with him, and the latter, unwilling as he was to a tête-à-tête with the young man whom he felt he was beginning to hate, could find no excuse to refuse. However, they had a very pleasant sail, setting aside Guy's gloomy feelings; he talked to Theo about his travels, and made himself as agreeable as possible; but all the time he felt that there was an air of concealed triumph about the boy which made him long to take him by the collar and thrash him or kick him. He noticed that Theo called him simply "Conway," never "Giulio," as in the old times, and he responded to the change by a cold "my lord" or "Rochdale."

The sail, however, came to an end, and after that the earl claimed Guy for the rest of the afternoon, and the whole family from the Manor adjourned, in the evening, to the Towers to dine.

Miss Everson and Mr. Jerningham were so fully occupied by the private theatricals, that they could think of nothing else. From discussing the play, they began to discuss the novel from which the plot was taken.

"Oh, Mr. Conway," she exclaimed, "have you read 'Lady Lee's Widowhood'?"

"No, Miss Everson, I have not."

"Well, you must read it at once; it is a most charming tale, and there is one character in it, oh! he is just splendid!"

"'A perfect brick,' I suppose," suggested Guy quietly.

"Yes, he is; you may laugh if you choose. Onslow, I mean; Lady Clara, just think, neither of these stupid men know about him! He is a man with a mystery! Nobody knows anything about him; he is only a subaltern,—a sergeant, I think,—and a young lady falls in love with him."

"You say nobody knows who he is. Does he know himself?" asked Mr. Jerningham.

Guy glanced at the speaker, but he seemed to have no covert intention in the remark.

"Why, of course he does; was there ever a person who did not?" asked the young lady, laughing. "Just imagine any one knowing nothing about themselves; how queer they must feel, particularly when with other people who have natural family ties! How I should pity anybody I knew so situated."

Guy pulled at his beard with nervous force, and at length found courage to glance at Rose. She was playing with her fan, but her color was high and her teeth were caught over her lower lip. Presently Rochdale broke the silence:

"Such a person as you describe is deserving of every one's pity, Miss Everson, for what has he not lost in being deprived of all natural ties so early as to retain no memory of them! But such a person ought to be very careful how he intrudes upon others, or forces himself into intimate relations with them."

A hand was laid heavily on Rochdale's shoulder as he finished speaking, and the young man turned to meet the stern, reproving eyes of his father fixed upon him.

"Shame on you, Rochdale, for such sentiments! I blush that a son of mine should hold them for a moment. The words of the poet express the true philosophy, 'The rank is but the guinea stamp, the man's the gowd for a' that.' Remember that, and never express such narrow-minded opinions again. Well, Miss Everson, was the mystery cleared up?"

"Oh, yes; he turns out to be the son of a gentleman, and the cousin of one of the officers!"

"And he marries the lady?"

"Of course, and she would have married him anyhow, in spite of her relations and his low rank, even if the secret had not been found out."

"I admire her character then, without knowing anything about the book."

"She was only a true woman, and gave her hand where her heart had gone before," said Rose, quietly.

Guy started, and the color, which the insolent taunt of Rochdale had not quickened, rushed to his very brow. He glanced at Rose; she was very pale, and the hand that held her fan trembled, but she would not look at him.

To quiet the tumult in his heart, Guy got up and went to the window to look out on the night. The talk went on; he could hear Miss Everson still holding forth upon the merits of the novel, and expressing her regret that the mysterious Onslow had not been brought into the play. Presently, finding they did not miss him, he stepped through the window out upon the grass, and in a few moments stood beneath the old elm-tree, which was the only one of the monarchs of the park that stood very near the house. Lost in his own thoughts, he did not remem-

ber the loss of time, and the party were just breaking up when he rejoined them.

Upon two things he had decided; one was to open the mysterious package, the other to tell Rose Forrester of his love for her. But which should he do first? There was the rub. If she loved him he knew she would do as the girl in the novel would have done,—marry him, no matter whom he might find himself to be; but had he the right, could he in honor ask her to share a life over which some indelible disgrace had been flung? Ought he not first to know *who* and *what* he was before he spoke to her? Onslow knew his own story, though he chose to keep it a secret from others. Such was not his case. But he would know to-morrow; he would wait no longer, —a resolution which the events of the next twenty-four hours confirmed him in; and he would also read "Lady Lee's Widowhood."

CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning Lady Margaret did not make her appearance. The earl, also, excused himself from his guests, as his wife was suffering from one of her attacks, and he could not leave her. So the company were left to their own resources.

Guy carefully avoided Theo; nor was he in the mood for helping the others to pass the time in careless gayety. The mysterious packet was in his breast-pocket, and every now and then he would put his hand on it, to be sure of its safety; but he could not bring himself to read it yet. Then, too, being the only one who knew the real nature

of Lady Margaret's attack (which was represented to the other guests as a mere headache), he was anxious and distressed for the earl.

Rose and Miss Everson, and, of course, Mr. Jerningham, were over during the day to overlook the work in the billiard-room. After luncheon, they proposed driving over to a neighbor's, whose daughter, Rose said, had a decided talent for acting comic characters, and was a very good mimic, and would do Tabitha Stork admirably, if she could be prevailed upon to take the part.

Wandering about the house rather aimlessly, Guy happened to pass a door which he had not seen opened, just as the housekeeper was about to enter the room. Through the open door he caught a glimpse of pictures and armor, and knowing, from the antiquity of the Manor, that the collection must be interesting, begged permission to enter.

Mrs. Crane readily consented, and threw the door wide open. As he crossed the threshold, and glanced around him, that strange half-remembrance came over him again; the portraits, the quaint old armor, seemed so many old friends; as, indeed, they might, for the picture-gallery had been his favorite play-place, and many a mimic gallop had he had up and down its length, astride of the very same old sword upon which he now laid his hand.

He gazed earnestly at the portraits. They were in every size and style,—some in gay cavalier's dress, with velvet cloaks and plumed hats; others in full suit of mail, with gauntleted hand resting upon the gleaming helmet. Ladies smiled down upon him in farthingale and ruff, or coquettishly peeped from behind huge Spanish fans. Others there were in the stiff coat and choker of George the Fourth's time, and the still more ungraceful feminine habiliments of that day. As he paused before each, Mrs. Crane had some remark to make; she seemed to know the

family history from A to Z. At length he stood before a canvas, some three feet by five, which represented a boy of four years, dressed in more modern costume than any of the others. He was playing with a large setter-dog, of a light-tawny color, with white feet and breast, and tail tipped with white.

Guy stood spell-bound. Where—in what previous existence—had he seen that boy?—where had he had such a dog to play with? and who was the gentleman who had painted his picture, bribing him to keep quietly in some desired attitude by presents of bonbons, and, what he prized more, most marvelous stories of adventure by flood and field? As he passed his hands over his face in a vain endeavor to drive away the clouds that still obscured his memory, Mrs. Crane spoke,—

"Ah, sir, that is his lordship's oldest son,—him as was lost so many years ago!"

"Lost!" exclaimed Guy. "I understood that the earl's first wife and child had been drowned."

"Yes, that's what I meant by lost, sir. Did you never hear the particulars, sir?"

"Never. Lord Straithness himself told me of his wife's death; but it was, evidently, a subject of so painful a nature that I never pressed him for the particulars. Did you live here in the first lady's time?"

"Oh, no, sir; the old housekeeper was my aunt, and I lived in the village, but came up to the Manor very often to see her, and to bring Mrs. Charteris (the old earl was living then) her laces, which she used to say I did up for her better than any one else; and then I'd have a romp with Master Guy (and a lovely little gentleman he was, as ever you see), sometimes out on the terrace, and sometimes in this very room. He was very fond of playing horse, and riding about on that old sword you picked up a min-

ute ago. Ah, sir, but it was a bitter day when they were taken!"

"Tell me about it," said Guy.

"Well, sir, I only heard it at second-hand. Me and my sister had been up to the Manor that very morning; Mr. Charteris—the earl—was away; the mistress had lost an uncle, or some kin, very suddenly, and he had gone to the funeral. Well, that afternoon Master Guy begged to go to the boat. They were in the habit of taking a sail nearly every day. It was a boat the master had built for the mistress special, and she did manage it beautiful! So they went; and, sir, they never came back. My lord —Mr. Charteris, that is—came that evening, just while they were searching, and they found the boat sunk, down the river, and Master Guy's hat; but the bodies was carried out to sea with the tide."

As the woman spoke, the picture of what she had described came up before Guy with startling vividness, only it was from the child's point of view that he saw it; and it seemed to him that he had had a part in the action,—that he was that child. But what folly! he told himself. He was getting as nervous and fanciful as a woman!

"Is there not a portrait of the first lady—of Mrs. Charteris?" he asked.

"Oh, yes; a lovely picture,—it is down in my lady's private sitting-room."

"Can I see it?"

"Certainly, sir; I have the key,—it is the room where Mrs. Charteris sat, too, and where the master spent the first days after her death, shut up with Shott, and seeing no one."

"Shott, the dog's name!" said Guy, not as a question, but simply making the assertion. Of course, that was *his* dog's name.

As he turned to follow Mrs. Crane from the room, he met the earl at the door. He paused, and held out his hand; Mrs. Crane courtesied and withdrew.

"So, Giulio, you have been going back to the roots of things! This collection is a very fair guide."

"Yes," replied Guy; "I have an intense love for old relics, particularly family ones; all the more so, perhaps," he added sadly, "because I have none of my own."

"My poor Giulio!" said the earl, laying his hand kindly on his shoulder. "Have you never opened that packet?"

"No, my lord; but I shall do so soon—to-night, perhaps; for I feel it is due to myself and my future—which, thanks to your kindness and generosity, looks very bright, in spite of all—to know the truth."

"I think so, too, Giulio. Not, my dear boy, that you must take to heart Theo's rash, rude words last night. He did not—no, I can't say that—I fear he did mean them; but he is irritated and unsettled on some matter very important to himself and his future happiness. A matter in which, however much my wishes may be on his side—for his success—I will not interfere. So I must beg you to be patient with him. The boy has noble traits, Giulio, which his faults only show more clearly. I know you will accuse me of undue partiality—but I do not think I am guilty of that. I love him, God only knows how dearly. He came in the place of the one that was taken—whose loss at one time I felt I could not bear; but he has filled that place so completely that if—if the other were to come back from the dead—if the sea were to cast him up again—I could not put Theo out of it! There!' he continued after a pause to recover himself, "you will think me foolish. Much as I love him, I see his faults, and feel that he was so rude last night I fear you cannot

forgive him. He sought you to beg your pardon—but you——"

"My lord, no more! From your son I can bear nearly everything; and when *you* ask for forgiveness for him it is granted before you speak! How is Lady Margaret now?"

"Better, thank you," replied the earl, grasping Guy's hand; "she is sleeping—or I left her sleeping quietly, and as I had some important business-letters to write I thought I would take this time to do so. Then I want to talk to you about the election for Fernlie—we must be successful there!"

As Guy passed down the stairs, he met Rochdale coming up. The young man colored as their eyes met, and, only for a moment, hesitated, the next he held out his hand saying,—

"Once more, Giulio, I must beg you to forgive my rudeness—my unkind words—if you can."

"They are already forgiven, Theo, and forgotten—I have just left your father."

On reaching the lower hall, Guy was about to seek Mrs. Crane, to beg her to show him the portrait of the first mistress of Charteris, when he met Miss Everson and her party just leaving the billiard-room. Rose was not with them, having gone to Lady Margaret's room to inquire for her.

"Oh, Mr. Conway! have you seen how nicely the theatre is progressing? Lord Straithness is so kind to take so much trouble and such an interest! Why, he is going to have a regular scene-painter down from London—and real scenery to run in grooves just like a real theatre. And you are going with us, ain't you, this afternoon? Lady Worthington says she thinks Miss Wareham will take the part of Tabitha Stork, and we are going to see her, and insist upon it."

"I think I shall be obliged to deny myself the pleasure of the ride—I've——"

"No engagement—oh, Mr. Conway, don't say the word. Sir Thomas and Lady Clara are going, and Mr. Jerningham and I, and Lady Worthington——"

"Is not Rochdale going?"

"I don't think he has been asked. Besides, I don't think the earl would like him to leave home with his mother so ill——"

"Ought we not all to stay, on that account?"

"Certainly, if Lady Straithness is really dangerously ill. But Lady Rose has gone to see how she is, and it will depend upon her report whether we go or not. If we go you must go with us—we will take no refusal."

"Very well," replied Guy. "I shall obey your orders—and am at your service."

"That is right—and there comes the baroness. Well, is Lady Margaret better?"

"Much better," replied Rose, "and when I told her that we intended putting off our ride to Barnstaple this afternoon, she would not listen to it—insisted that she was well enough, and we must not put off any pleasure for her."

"And I have asked Mr. Conway to join the party."

"And he has consented?" asked Rose, looking up at him.

"He could not do otherwise, Lady Rose," replied Guy.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ride was a delightful one to all, but more particularly to Guy, for Rose was more like her old self than she had been since his return, and seemed to deprecate his displeasure at her former shyness. She begged him to dine at the Towers, and he promised to do so; consequently as the time between their return from their drive and the dinner hour was only sufficient for him to dress, he had no chance to open the sealed package. He took it out of his coat-pocket and locked it up in his dressing-table drawer before he left his room.

"The evening was as delightful as the ride had been, and Guy left the Towers, feeling that no matter what revelation of shame opening the package would make—he had tasted such supreme happiness that night that the world could never look dark to him again. For he had called her "Rose" as in the olden time; and she had smiled with pleasure at the name, and in return had called him "Giulio," and when he kissed her hand at parting she had not drawn it away, but let it nestle in his clasp, while her eyes sought his for one moment with a loving light in them, to fall before his gaze, as the rosy blushes stole over cheek and neck. She had worn his Mexican ornaments too, for the first time since his return.

Altogether, as Guy stood upon the terrace on his return to the Manor, and gazed upon the lovely scene, mellowed by the delicious moonlight, he could say with truth that he was supremely happy. Ah, Guy! Was there no monitor to whisper warning of coming sorrow? Look your last

with hopeful, happy eyes upon park and river, to-night; for it will be many a long day ere you can teach yourself to see aught of contentment or happiness in this world again!

He looked up at the fair, soft moon, as Guy Charteris had looked up at her, years ago. The sky was as serene then as now, and the silvery orb rolled through the liquid blue as calmly. Rollo, the Newfoundland dog, came up and greeted him dog-fashion; he played with the silky ears and patted the noble head, and it was with a sigh of perfect content that he finally turned to enter the house.

In order to reach the door of the hall opening on the terrace, Guy was obliged to pass a room the windows of which were thrown open to-night, and in which a lamp and several candles were burning. During the three days he had been at the Manor, these windows having been closed, he had not noticed them particularly. Now, attracted by the strong light, he paused and looked in:—It was Lady Straithness's sitting-room. She was there reclining upon a *chaise-longue*, while the earl sat beside her, reading aloud. Their faces were turned away from the open window, and Guy, having stepped lightly, they were not attracted by any sound from him.

He stood looking at the countess, studying the now evident traces the disease had made in her sweet face. Then, as he glanced at the earl, his heart went out to him with a throb of sympathy as he thought of the terrible blow which so surely if so slowly was to fall upon him. Presently he raised his eyes and started at what met them. He gazed long and earnestly; passed his hand over his brow as if to clear his vision, then looked again.

Over the mantel, filling in the whole panel, and illuminated by a lamp, arranged so as to throw the light just where it ought to fall, was a picture. There were three

figures, life-size, upon the canvas; one, a lady, was seated upon a mossy bank, beneath the shade of an oak-tree, weaving garlands of oak-leaves, with which a boy (the counterpart of the portrait in the gallery) was decking a tawny-colored setter-dog who submitted patiently, but with an inquiring glance turned towards his mistress, as if he wanted to know how long the affair was to last. The frame was a plain, narrow, black walnut one, but at the top was a scroll, and on it, in gilt letters, names and dates.

"Clare and Guy; born, 18— and 18—; lost, 18—;"

It was his mother's face! Changed as Clare had been in the last years of her life, the beauty faded and worn, still there was enough left to tell him who the original of the picture was. He had never forgotten his mother's features, the sad, sweet, patient beauty of which had been his childish idea of all that was perfect. And here was the same face, so different! So radiant with life, love, and happiness! And the boy, was it not himself? or had he dreamed of just such a dog, and of being coaxed and petted to keep still a few moments in order to have a little boy just like him come out on the big canvas?

Guy and Clare! Clare and Guy! Clare! He had heard his "Uncle George" call her so. But this Clare and Guy were dead,—drowned in the dreadful river,—washed out to sea with the tide. So people said, but there came now to him a confused remembrance of a boat with water in it,—and the river,—the river was so familiar to him and yet so strange. The Manor, too: some parts of it seemed to be mixed up with these perplexing memories. His very room,—that very picture,—had he not seen them before?

He held the solution in his own hands, he must read it before he slept. Slowly and quietly he turned away and entered the house. Slowly he ascended the broad stair-

case to his room, for he dreaded, much as he longed for, the revelation.

"Blood is thicker than water." The old adage came to his mind as he went over the years since he had known the earl. What else had attracted them so strongly to each other? Why had he looked up to and revered Lord Straithness as if he had been his own father? And why had his lordship in return seemed to lean upon him as he would have done upon an oldest son? Why, too, had Lady Margaret, with all her kindness and gentleness, and the real interest she showed in his welfare, yet recognized an antagonism between them, of which Rochdale was the objective point?

He reached his room, closed and locked the door, took the mysterious package out of the drawer in which he had locked it, drew the candles together on the table, and seated himself beside it. He essayed to break the seal, but his hands shook so he could not do it. He laid the paper down, and leaning back in his chair strove to steady his nerves by sheer force of will. Then he opened the package. Inclosed was a small miniature, exquisitely painted, and the face that looked up at him from the ivory was that of the Earl of Straithness. There was no mistake. There was the same intellectual, high-bred, noble face, feature for feature; the hair curling in close curls over his head was brown, as Guy remembered it when he first knew him; the long, drooping moustache, now white as the hair, was brown, too, still there was no mistaking the face.

"Father!"

He hardly knew he spoke, and the sound of his own voice frightened him.

Then he opened the paper and read——

BOOK EIGHTH.

CHAPTER I.

THE gray daylight dawning found Guy sitting where we left him. The candles had burnt down to their sockets, a pile of manuscript leaves lay between his feet, his elbows rested on his knees, his head was bent down over them, so that his hands were clinched in his hair, and his eyes stared with dilated gaze at the papers on the floor.

So the gray daylight found him; so he sat while Aurora opened still further the portals of the East, and touched the tops of the trees, the summits of the hills, and the tips of the dancing waves with her rosy fingers, causing all nature to deck herself in rich array to greet her king. So he sat, when, everything being prepared by his handmaid, the Day-god rose from his couch of clouds and looked down upon his waiting subjects.

Then Guy roused himself; but the face he raised to greet the morning was so haggard and changed from that with which he had lingeringly gazed into the moonlit sky, that Rose would hardly have known him. One by one he picked up the sheets of paper lying at his feet and arranged them in an orderly pile upon the table, then he folded them and put them in an envelope.

That done, he picked up a pen and was about to write a name upon it. But he paused, laid the pen down, took

it up again, wrote the word "Lady" on the envelope, then threw it away again.

Should he tell Rose? Need she know?

Yes; it would be impossible to keep the whole truth from her, and better she should know all than part. But not yet; let him look the matter over calmly himself, see it in all its bearings, so he could the better guide and counsel her. Her father had wrought the evil; his malice had worked all the mischief; would *his* father receive her as his daughter when he knew the truth? Would *she* marry him knowing all the truth! Ah! Rose, Rose, not for one moment did the coronet outweigh your love in Guy's heart! He must win you, come else what might!

But what was he to do? How begin his tale? Go to the earl and say, The woman you have called your wife is not so. Clare, my mother, was living when you married her! Your boy, your Theodore, is a—— Ah! how could he? Distinctly, as if they had been just spoken, Guy heard the words:

"He has filled that place so completely, that if the other one were to come back, if the sea were to give back its prey, I could not put Theo out of it."

Were those words meant in their fullest meaning? Was there indeed no place for him? The sea had given back its prey; would not his mother's eyes looking from his face open his father's heart to him? Must he still be an outcast?

And Rose, his peerless flower? Ah! thought was madness! He could not, would not give it leave to torture him. He plunged his face into cold water, removed, as far as possible, the traces of the night's anguish from his person, then, securing the package carefully, ran downstairs and out into the fresh air. The cool breath of the morning revived him, but he had no eyes for the beauties

and brightness of the scene. The dog who had stood beside him the night before came forward now with a joyous gambol and bark of greeting, but he laid his hand on his head mechanically, and the animal, after looking up wonderingly into his face, started off towards the river for his morning bath. Guy stood on the terrace, looked off over the landscape, and marked the silver-winged sea-gulls flying up from the shore with a sort of dull fascination, as if his fate depended upon the birds making a certain flight; and perhaps it was their movements that gave him the idea of finding relief in motion, for he turned towards the stables, ordered a horse to be saddled, and, mounting, rode rapidly away.

Nor did he draw rein until the animal showed signs of weariness and refused to obey the urging of whip or spur. Then he looked around him and found himself miles away from Charteris, in a part of the country to which he was a perfect stranger. He looked at his watch, it was nearly eleven o'clock. Having had no rest all night and not breaking his fast that morning, he felt himself overcome with fatigue, and all thought was centred upon finding physical relief. A little farther on, a sudden turn of the road revealed a small wayside inn, at which both horse and rider were glad to halt. He saw his dumb companion comfortably stabled and fed, ordered something for himself, and as soon as he had eaten, locked himself into the room provided for him, and, throwing himself on the bed, slept the heavy sleep of mental and physical exhaustion.

CHAPTER II.

MEANTIME he had been missed at the Manor, and much surprise, and, on the part of the earl, uneasiness, at his absence was expressed. But as there was no clue to his whereabouts, except the missing horse, they were forced to possess their souls in patience until he should return, or send some word. Towards night he did return, but went to his room immediately, and sent to excuse his absence from dinner on the plea of indisposition. When the earl sought him, he was not in his room; nor did they meet until a much later hour.

During the ride home Guy thought over his situation carefully, and found he could come to no conclusion until he had seen Rose. It was due to her to be told the whole terrible story; but how could he tell her? Indeed, he could not,—she must read it, as he had done, and bear the blow with what strength God would grant her. So, immediately upon his return, he inclosed the package to her, and sent it by a servant, with directions to put it into no one's hands but Lady Worthington's. He added but a line from himself. It was:

"Meet me on the beach when you have read,—I will be waiting for you."

He longed to call her his darling,—to add some words of loving comfort to the heart so soon to be torn with such bitter anguish; but he checked the impulse,—let her know the bare truth at first, the love and tenderness would be shown afterwards, when he and she had settled what was to be done.

The trees of the park grew very close to the water's edge, allowing only about twenty yards of sandy beach to intervene between them and the breakers. Here and there, upon the edge of the sward, rustic benches were placed for the accommodation of those who wished to spend any length of time under the spell of the restless waters. Upon one of these Guy threw himself, and was soon lost to all around him, in sad and bitter thought.

"Giulio! oh, Giulio! Forgive! He was my father!"

How long he had sat there he knew not; it was the voice of Rose, hoarse with suffering, that recalled him to himself. She was at his feet, clasping his knees and pleading with white lips and wild eyes for pardon for her father.

"Rose! my darling!"

And he gathered her up in his arms and held her close, until her passion of tears had spent itself, murmuring tender words of love, and kissing lip and cheek and eyes. When the first agony was over, and she could think of the meaning of his words and actions, she drew his face down to hers and kissed his lips, trying to smile through her tears.

This was their betrothal.

Then, as she grew calm, they sat for awhile watching the waves, and the sea-birds flitting over them, sometimes so low as to dip their silvery wings in the water, anon so high as to be almost out of sight.

They tried to plan for the future, for Guy told her of the earl's words to him only the day before. How, with them ringing in his ears, could he tell him who he was?

But Rose had greater faith; she knew that the joy of finding the one in whom from the first he had taken such unusual interest,—for whom he had felt such warm affection,—was, indeed, the son who, from babyhood, he had

mourned as dead, would sweep away all later feelings and open the father's heart to admit him to his proper place there.

But Rochdale—Theo, and Lady Margaret? The date of Clare's death and their marriage—how was all that to be managed? And Rose?

"Put the manuscript into his lordship's hands, Giulio, dearest; let him know *all*. Then, be the consequences what they may, we have done right. As for me—if—if—by any suffering I can atone for my father's sin, gladly, willingly will I endure it. Only, that I may be sure of your love through all, Giulio. My father! my father! and I loved him so!"

She covered her face with her hands; he drew her towards him again, and soothed her with all a lover's arts.

The sun had gone down into the crimsoned waters, the twilight had begun to fade into the darkness of night; and still they sat there, heedless of all but their own full hearts. At last, Rose remembered how they must be missing her. She must play her part of hostess with a smiling face, even if her heart was breaking. So they rose, and slowly retraced their steps to the bridge. There they parted, but only for a time, for the first rehearsal of the play was to come off that evening, and they must go through the mockery of that as best they could.

Guy reached his room unnoticed; the ladies had just left the dinner-table, and the gentlemen were still sitting over their wine.

Rose found that dinner had been delayed for her, and a search had been instituted in vain. Hastily changing her dress, she made her appearance in the drawing-room, and apologized as well as she was able for her absence. Fortunately, the play was the uppermost idea in the minds

of all, and no particular comment was made upon her delay.

How Rose got through that terrible dinner she never knew. Worse still was to be the ordeal of the rehearsal. How could she and Guy go through it with this terrible secret between them?

But when Guy came she found his presence nerved and supported her. He was quieter than usual, otherwise there was no change. A glance passed between them, in which he strove to assure her, and she to thank him.

The rehearsal passed off much to Miss Everson's satisfaction, and the next one was fixed for that night week, on which occasion books would be tabooed.

CHAPTER III.

THE party of guests at the Manor was lessened considerably the next day, all leaving but Sir Thomas Felton and Guy. This gave the earl the opportunity he had been seeking to talk over the Fernlie election with his protégé. Accordingly, immediately after breakfast, he proposed to Guy to spend the morning with him in going over the business. And as Lady Margaret's room was more pleasantly situated than his study, he suggested that they should adjourn thither. Poor Guy could find no excuse. As they entered the room he glanced up at the picture. The earl saw his glance, and followed it; he sighed, and passed his hand over his eyes:

"Yes, there they are, Giulio,—my sweet Clare and my first-born! But I cannot mourn for them as one without consolation; for, have I not been blessed in those who

have grown into their places? I often wonder if my little Guy would have developed as fine a nature as Theo has; and my wife! But they are so entirely different, I couldn't, if I would, make any comparison."

"It is a beautiful picture!" Guy forced himself to answer.

"Yes. How well I remember the bribing process we had to go through with the boy to keep him still! You have his eyes, Giulio; I believe that was what attracted me at first to you. Well, now to business."

It required a strong effort on Guy's part not to throw his arms around the earl's neck and call him "father." But Theo had "grown into his place,"—he was an outcast yet,—better submit quietly to his fate. So, he listened to Straithness's plans, and tried to enter into them,—strove to pay the attention the earl had a right to expect, but in what mental distress can well be imagined. He could not refrain from glancing at the picture over and over again, and twice he put his hand on the MS. and was about to give it to his patron, but his heart failed him.

"And now, Giulio, about that——"

Guy's heart stood still. Was he about to ask if he had opened the package? But the momentous question was prevented by the entrance of Lady Margaret, and both gentlemen arose to greet her. As Guy stood up, his face was brought into the same line of vision with Clare's portrait. The earl had turned away to draw up a chair. She glanced at the picture, then at Guy, and a sickening feeling crept up to her heart, and she staggered into her husband's arms.

He caught her and held her to him, in dread for what the result might be; but she recovered herself in a moment, and made some excuse for the attack. Guy did

not dare to meet her eyes, but he felt them fixed upon his face several times, and he grew very nervous.

"I hope I am not interrupting an important tête-á-tête," said Margaret.

"By no means, Pearl: we have talked over all the business relating to the election, and next week——"

"A message, my lord, from Mr. Wareham," said the servant, entering at this moment; "and will your lordship please to meet him at Barnstaple, at two o'clock, on important business?"

"Say 'yes'—I'll be there," answered the earl. "And I'll have no more than time to get there," he continued, looking at his watch.

Fortunately for Guy, Lady Margaret seemed to have no desire for a tête-à-tête, but excused herself and left the room with the earl.

As soon as he was free Guy sought the beach. There he was not likely to be disturbed, and the restless moaning of the ocean kept time to his troubled thoughts. There too he was to meet Rose, as soon as she could escape from her duties to her guests.

It was late in the day when she joined him, for it seemed, to her nervous, excited mind, that she could not move without a demand upon her attention from some quarter. At length, luncheon over, she left them to prepare for a drive from which she excused herself and hurried to the *rendezvous*.

She shuddered as she passed the bridge, and could not bear to look at the water She thought of the agony the bereaved husband had suffered as he gazed upon the river, of the anguish and the misery the walls of her own house had witnessed, and she felt as if she could not remain there any longer—she must go over to Ireland. Worthington had none but happy associations connected with

it; she would make that her future home, and when she was married—but here she paused in the mental picture. It was all darkness and confusion.

When she met Guy, it was with a pitiful attempt to look hopeful and to smile—but it was a very wan smile, and the sweet eyes filled with tears. He held her close to him and kissed them away. Then they paced the sands in earnest talk.

"Are you aware, dearest, that it was a project of my—his lordship's, that you and Theo should marry?"

"Lady Margaret once or twice hinted it to me."

"So you see, even if this—if I had not—if I were not who I am—I should have hardly dared to hope for their consent. Did you ever think seriously of Rochdale as your husband?"

"Never, Giulio! To me he is a mere boy—I love him dearly as a cousin—and friend——"

"But you know he loves you?"

"Yes; but it is a boy's first passion—he will get over it without injury to himself."

"Poor Theo—if——"

"It seems cruel to the boy, Giulio—but he is a noble fellow and will see the justice of it."

"But Rose, suppose I do not speak—suppose I let the secret lie between us? How can I hurl such a thunderbolt into the midst of a peaceful, happy family!"

Then he told her of Lady Margaret's partial recognition of him that morning.

"Act as your own generous heart shall dictate, Giulio—let no thought of me influence you. It matters little whether you are known as the eldest son of the Earl of Straithness, or plain Giulio Conway, of Fernlie, the protégé of his lordship. You are my Giulio through all."

"My own Rose! Ah, dearest, I know you love me,

but you cannot know how my hungry heart craves every expression of your love. Think what my life has been—so cut off from natural ties—and pity me, Rose——"

He paused, for the earl and countess were approaching through the trees; they were in earnest talk, and had not as yet seen that there was any one near. So the lovers had time to draw apart. Then Rose approached Lady Margaret and spoke. She started and looked surprised, and an expression of regret passed over her face as she bowed to Guy. He, too, approached and the four stood upon the sands talking, but every little while Margaret would send a searching glance over Guy's face—and if her eyes chanced to meet his, they had a mute appeal in them which he could not acknowledge nor answer.

At length their attention was called to the movements of a boat which was scudding before the freshening wind from the direction of the river.

"Theo said he was going for a sail this afternoon—that must be he!" exclaimed Margaret.

"Foolish boy! why does he not take in his sail! The wind is too strong for it," exclaimed the earl, hurrying down the beach, as if he expected to reach his son in that way. Guy and Rose instinctively drew apart from the others, and watched with bated breath.

Rochdale saw them and waved his hat, then as he stood up to change the sail, a sudden gust of the wind loosened it, the boat gave a lurch, and in another moment the young man was in the water.

"My God!" shrieked Margaret, grasping her husband's arm.

"Be calm, my love—our boy can swim—it is not far," was his reply to her; but his heart sank within him. "Must the sea have them both!" he said to himself.

Guy and Rose watched the swimmer anxiously; once

only their eyes met, but neither dared think what might be the meaning of that glance.

Theo was a good swimmer, and made headway well at first. But either he had overtasked his strength, or a cramp seized him—he began to lag, and finally threw up his arms and disappeared beneath the waves.

A fearful scream from Margaret—a groan of agony from Straithness roused Guy from the thoughts which had been crowding into his brain as he stood there. Again his eyes met those of Rose; she grasped his arm and whispered with ashy lips, "Not that, Guy—for God's sake—not *that!*"

With the sound of her voice came a vision of the far-off Dalmatian Monastery, and over the gate he read the words,—

"*What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*"

The next instant he had flung off coat and hat and boots, and was breasting the waters towards the place where Theo had disappeared. He rose again, and Guy caught him before he sank.

It was a fierce struggle with the waves to return, and only by strenuous efforts was Guy enabled to reach the shore with his insensible burden. He laid the slight form at his father's feet. Margaret threw herself down beside it, tore open coat and vest, and laid her hand upon his heart. "He lives—it beats—My God, I thank thee!" she cried, and sank down beside her boy equally unconscious.

CHAPTER IV.

"ROSE."

"Yes, Guy."

"Can you bear it?"

"God will help me, Guy."

"God! Ah, why is He so cruel? What have I done to——"

"Guy! Guy!" She threw her arms around him, and looked up at him with a face so agonized he hardly knew it. How could words meet that suffering? What of earth could solace it? He flung himself on his knees:

"Rose, my darling, tell me once more you forgive me,—that you will think tenderly of me in the far-off future, when my place in the world shall know me no more! Speak to me, love—speak! Put your hand on my head, and bless me!"

She looked at him, kneeling there, long and steadily; then she laid her hand upon his curls, and strove to speak; but the white lips refused their office. She bowed herself down and kissed his brow, and he knew the blessing came in that mute caress.

Margaret—Lady Straithness—is dead. Once more Guy Charteris sits at a widowed hearth. But he is not all desolate now,—his son is spared; he has still something to live for.

And Guy?

Bitter had been the anguish, and fierce the struggle; but he has conquered. The die is cast, and he knows

there is but one course open to him now. The horrible temptation to which he listened for a small fraction of a minute claims his whole life in reparation. He was torn with conflicting sentiments before; he knew not which course to pursue. The way is open to him now, and his own sin has pointed it out. Along that way, so dark and desolate, he must walk alone; no human hand can guide, no human companionship can cheer. God and his angels only can bring him peace,—to Him only can he look for comfort! And rest will come when, the long bead-roll of his atonement being told, he lays down the weary burden of his life at his Saviour's feet.

In that terrible moment, when the thought that letting his brother sink would cut the Gordian knot of his own fate stood black before him, and he let it stay—did not put it down, but looked at it calmly, in all its horrible deformity—in that terrible moment, all the bright hopes he had built of earthly happiness were swallowed up in the surging waves. Margaret's death did not help him; she could now, of course, know nothing of the shame and suffering which a revelation of himself would have caused her,—showing, as it would have done, her terribly false position; but he felt that had he not hesitated,—had he not listened to the voice of the tempter,—she would not have died. Her death was upon his head, and his life must atone for it.

Rose knew it.

He had written to her of his determination; and when they met he had knelt at her feet and begged her to forgive the anguish he had brought into her life,—begged her to help and strengthen him.

She found it was no passing horror of his sinful thought which time would assuage and obliterate; she knew he could find no peace of mind until it was atoned for; and,

knowing this, with all a woman's self-devotion she put her own heart-suffering aside, and bent all her energies to solace and support him in the sacrifice. She, too, owed him an atonement for her father's sin, the vicarious atonement of which they had talked up there in Scotland, beside their bonny burn ; and if, by renouncing all earthly happiness for herself, she could contribute to his peace, she was ready with the offering.

So they had sought the beach to bid each other a last farewell. Guy had not trusted himself to see the earl ; he had written a last letter, filled with gratitude and affection, and a yearning which Straithness could not understand, but renouncing all his plans and projects and future hopes and bidding an eternal farewell to him and England.

He will not return to the Manor,—the house where he should hold the first-born's honored place, and which had grown strangely dear to him in the last few days. He had taken leave of it, and, standing in the terrace, it seemed to him that the long garlands of the ivy which clothed the gray-stone walls, waving in the wind, seemed so many arms beckoning him back to name and home and happiness. He will not return to them ; he wishes his last memories to be of Rose, and of her only.

How can language paint the agony of that parting? How can he give her up? They are so young, and all the world was so bright with hope—when? Only a few days ago? Only a week ago? And there had been no earthquake,—no upheaving of things from their foundations in the material world ; the sky was as calm, the earth as beautiful in the fullness of its midsummer charms. The sea rolled on its never-ceasing waves, heedless of the hopes they had engulfed ; one after the other they rushed upon the beach, up almost to their very feet ; and the sunlight danced upon their white caps and sparkled in the

drops of spray, and all was as it had been. But their eyes saw nothing save gloom and darkness and deep despair.

And so they parted. There were no words spoken, no agonized embrace at the last. Eye spoke to eye language that no lips could utter. And, gazing into each other's faces, they slowly drew apart—she towards the sheltering trees, among which he lost her; he along the desolate shore—whither?

CHAPTER V.

THE monk Anselmo, aged and worn with fasts and vigils, sat at the monastery gate, as he was fond of doing, and watched the sun go down into the sea.

His lips moved in prayer, and the white, emaciated fingers passed the beads of a rosary through their trembling grasp. His dim eyes can see the power and goodness of his God in the earth He has created, and the loveliness of the scene is not lost to him. But there is a figure, worn and weary, toiling slowly up the path over which Guy's young footsteps used to spring so lightly, which does not attract him specially.

It is not until Guy himself, altered and suffering, stands before him that he recognizes him. Then he essays to rise, but ere he can do so his foster-child is kneeling at his feet, and resting his poor aching head upon his knee.

"I have come home, father, for rest and comfort,—to hide myself and my sin."

"My poor boy! Has it come so soon?"

And the trembling fingers are passed over the brown curls caressingly, and tears drop from the aged eyes.

BOOK NINTH AND LAST.

CHAPTER I.

EIGHT years have passed, dragging their weary length (brightened only by the power she has for good to others) to Rose — Lady Worthington; bearing on their wings increasing peace and rest to Giulio Conway; whispering new hopes and joys to Theodore — Viscount Rochdale; and laying their hands upon the heart of the earl (gently, not smiting it, but as a harper lays his open palm upon his harp, to deaden the vibrations). Rochdale and his wife do the honors of Straithness Castle, and Rose spends much of her time at Worthington, and her tenants arise and call her blessed. But Charteris clings to the old Manor, and seldom leaves it. His ambition is dead, and he cares for nothing the world can give. Tempting offers have been made to him from friends in place and power, but he declines them all.

The only thing he does care for is a visit from his children and his grand-children. And Rose often forces herself to endure the painful memories which have gathered around Brandon Towers, in order to be near him; for her presence is a great comfort and solace to the old man.

He fretted much at Guy's sudden and mysterious departure, and resented the readiness with which he gave

up all his future—and that future had looked so fair and bright! Guy told him in the letter in which he bade farewell to him, that he had opened the sealed package and what he found there had driven him away. The earl felt Guy's want of confidence in himself in this matter keenly —what could have been revealed there that the boy could not have confided to him, his best friend? But Guy was gone—gone, and there was no trace of him left; he could hear nothing of him; he had written to Father Anselmo, but the letter was answered in a strange hand—Father Anselmo was dead.

Charteris did not know the tie which bound Guy and Rose, but when he spoke to her of Rochdale's suit, she silenced him by telling him of her love for Guy, and that she would have married him, had they felt it possible knowing what the fatal package contained. No other could be her husband—and if Giulio never came back to claim her, she would pray God to meet him in heaven.

"Did he say he would return?" asked Charteris eagerly.

"No—I cannot hope it—I only pray for it. God is merciful as well as just, and the future is in His hands."

So the years went on.

But one spring the earl grew restless, and wrote to Rose proposing she should join him in a Continental tour, as Rochdale could not go.

Without hesitation she consented, and the first of March saw them in Paris. They had no fixed plan, but went whither their fancy led them, and fond, sweet memories clustering around the sad-faced queen of the Adriatic drew them irresistibly to her, when once upon Italian soil.

It was the week before Easter, and Lenten services were being held in all the churches. In that of the

Saluta, a regular course of sermons in English had been given during the preceding six weeks, for the benefit of those strangers who wished to profit by them. The preacher was a Franciscan monk, comparatively young, for he could not be forty years old, whose wonderful soul-stirring eloquence was the talk of Venice, and all visitors thronged to hear him. He was emaciated and worn with austerities, and the frail body seemed hardly able to contain the fervid spirit which animated it.

Rose and the earl, hearing an English lady whom they knew, and who was stopping at the same hotel, express her enjoyment of the sermon, and wonder at the marvelous gift the preacher possessed, decided to hear him themselves.

That afternoon, they crossed to the Saluta church—stepping into the gondola, from the Piazza di San Marco, at the same *riva* at which they first met Guy. Rose's eyes filled as she recalled the scene—and the earl passed his hand over his face and gazed out over the waters. They reached the church and wandered about until, at the appointed hour, a monk in the white robes of the Franciscans came out of the sacristy and walked slowly down to the pulpit. His cowl was drawn over his head, but Rose noticed that he was tall, and the hands which gathered his habit up from about his feet were white and beautifully shaped. She followed the figure with a sort of fascination. He ascended the pulpit-steps, knelt for a moment in prayer, stood up and threw back his cowl. Rose had bowed her head as he knelt, and when she looked up again, he was standing uncovered before her, and the face that she looked upon was the face of Giulio Conway.

A faint cry escaped her, and she half rose from her seat, then remembering where she was, sank back and

covered her face with her hands. The earl had not noticed the preacher—he was glancing around the church, observing the picturesque groups of worshipers in their odd costumes. At his companion's exclamation he looked up and met the eyes of the monk fixed upon him. He started and looked again—yes, it was Giulio, his long-lost Giulio; but changed—oh, so changed! He put out his hand and laid it upon that of Rose in silent sympathy.

Then the voice of the monk broke the stillness; that rich, sweet voice, so familiar to them both—so inexpressibly dear to one—thrilled through and through them. He had the notes of his intended sermon with him, but after a moment's thought he put them aside, and clasping his hands on the edge of the pulpit, leaned slightly forward and quoted the words:

"What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Then he spoke: the sermon was not long—it lasted scarcely twenty minutes, but in that little time he pictured for Rose the struggles, trials, and temptations of the last eight years, in words that thrilled her every fibre. The earl, too, knew enough to understand the inspiration in part—and all resentment was lost in admiration.

But as Guy was speaking, Straithness had time to note the changes which had come over his favorite; the hands were thin and transparent, the face wasted and worn and pale; great black circles were around the hollow sunken eyes, and the nostrils looked pinched and thin. Once or twice as he put his hankerchief to his lips it was stained with blood.

He spoke to Rose, forgetting that there were others near, and as she looked up once, and found those beautiful eyes fixed upon her with such tenderness and pity, she

bowed her head over her clasped hands and did not raise it again. He finished his discourse, and, descending the pulpit-steps, hurried into the thickest of the congregation and was lost in the crowd. The next afternoon, Rose and the earl were there; the intervening time had been spent by her in sad, heart-breaking retrospect—by him, in a vain effort to find the whereabouts of his protégé. But they were doomed to disappointment—the preacher was a stranger.

The next day the earl told Rose he had determined to find Guy, and they devoted the morning to the effort. They discovered that the monastery at which the monk was staying (for he was not resident in Venice, but had come from a house in Dalmatia) was in a different part of the city from the Saluta church, and, of course, on a different island. Thither Rose and her guardian repaired, to learn that him they sought was too indisposed to see them. The next evening, however, he was in the pulpit, though evidently suffering very much, and very weak. His sermon was short, and at the end he disappeared as quickly as he had done before. The same answer was returned when they sought the monastery—he could not see them.

The next evening he looked scarcely able to hold himself up, and his voice was weak and broken, but the eloquent words poured from his lips and held his hearers spell-bound. Towards the end, however, his strength failed, and as he descended from the pulpit, gave way entirely, and he sank upon the last step, unconscious.

In an instant Rose and the earl were at his side, and raising him from the ground. The crowd seemed to understand without words that he was in the hands of those who had a right, and dispersed quietly. The English lady lingered, but Rose told her that the monk was

her cousin—one whom they had lost sight of for many years, and had not yet been able to speak to. Therefore there was nothing she could do—and she, too, left them.

When Guy opened his eyes again he saw only Rose and the earl bending over him. A monk of his order stood near. He had hurried up to render assistance, but the earl told him the sick man was an old friend whom they had not seen for a long time, and begged him to leave him to them. He drew aside and waited.

So, when Guy opened his eyes again, their gaze rested on the sad, sweet face of Rose Forrester. A smile passed over his own, and he turned to the earl. The weak hands made an effort to clasp his, and the pale lips uttered but one word:

"Father!"

"He is calling you, my lord; he is your son," said Rose quietly, as she raised herself and made room for the earl. Straithness looked at her bewildered, then at Guy.

"Father, I am Guy! take me to your heart for the little time that is left!"

Again the pale lips spoke, and at the sound echoes from the far-off past awoke in Guy Charteris's breast—the name, the voice, those soft pleading eyes—he knew him now. He gazed long and fondly into the emaciated face.

"My boy! my Guy! Have I been so blind all these years?"

He did not ask any explanation; he knew his son was restored to him,—how, it mattered not. Restored to him, alas, only to be taken away again in a longer and a final parting. For even as he bent over him he saw the change, and knew he had found him but to lose him. He turned and beckoned to the monk. Following the mute direction of Guy's eyes they carried him to the grand altar, where the lamp was burning, and laid him upon the step of the

sanctuary. Charteris held his head in his arms, and Rose knelt with one hand clasped in both of hers. The monk bowed himself and recited the prayers for the dying.

Guy opened his eyes once more, looked fondly up into his father's face, signed to Rose, and whispered, "She will tell all."

Then he turned towards the altar, his lips moved in prayer, his eyes closed and they thought he slept; but presently the hand Rose held grew cold; without a struggle he had passed away, and the sunlight pouring in through the painted windows flooded with a sad glory the marble face of the dead.

CHAPTER II.

Rose told the story as Guy had requested. And when she finished the recital, and placed the MS. in the earl's hands, she left him without a word. She could not plead with *him* for forgiveness for *her* father. The injury had been too fearful, had entailed too terrible consequences upon the innocent victims for her to dare utter an excuse for the perpetrator. She had no claim upon the earl, as she had had upon Guy, to make her bold.

The shock was a great one, and Straithness did not recover from it as quickly as he would have done had he been younger, but not for one moment did he dream of visiting Sir Gilbert's sin upon his child.

Rose, when she left him, had sought her own room to give full vent to her grief and sorrow. She bowed herself down to the ground, and her whole frame shook with sobs.

"Rose, my poor child, my daughter!"

She looked up to see the earl standing over her. She drew herself to her knees and covered his hands with kisses, but he stooped and raised her and clasped her to his breast.

Over and over again did she tell him of Guy's struggles and sufferings, and how his own words, "Theo has filled his place," seemed to build up a wall between them, which his son dared not attempt to overthrow. And as he felt that he had himself been the means of driving his first-born from him, he bowed his gray head upon his hands and wept the bitterest tears ever wrung from the eyes and heart of a man.

Guy, Viscount Rochdale, was buried in the Franciscan habit; but his remains were transported to England, as were those of his mother, and rest beside Margaret, Countess of Straithness, among those of his name who had gone before him.

Immediately after Guy's death, Rose wrote to Theo to meet them in Rome, and he, fearing something had happened to his father, hastened to obey. As soon as he arrived he was told the sad story in part. The grave of Clare had been visited and all arrangements for removing the remains made before, so there was no clue to the date of her death to pain him. Charteris was anxious to spare Theo as much as possible, and to save him all unnecessary knowledge, hoping some arrangement could be made for the future.

The sad story was soon known far and near, and the church at Charteris visited for many a day after by curious crowds eager to see all that remained of the romance.

When the case was laid before the lawyer who had succeeded Mr. Upham in the management of the earl's affairs, he looked grave for a moment, but after a few

questions as to the dates and the time of the two events, in a few words dispelled their fears. By comparing the difference of time between New York and Rome, and the hours at which Clare's death and Charteris's marriage occurred, it was found that the former event occurred just four hours before the latter. Thus the painful question was settled, and Rochdale need never know what a narrow escape he had made from losing name and title.

Guy, Earl of Straithness, is an old man now, bowed with the weight of over seventy years. His son with his family have left Scotland, and make the Manor their home, for the earl must not be left alone. His worldly affairs are in order, and he calmly awaits the summons which must come to all, sooner or later. Feeling sure he was doing what Guy would have wished, he gave Fernlie to Malcolm Maitland's wife, and Mrs. Maitland, finding Lizzie so handsomely dowered, made her will leaving the Evergreens to Lillie, whose marriage with Jack followed soon upon that of Malcolm's.

The O'More was a wanderer for many years, and when at length he did settle down upon his estates, he kept bachelor hall in true Irish fashion.

Lady Worthington resides mostly at the barony. Her hair is blanched before the time, but the lovely face has lost none of its beauty, and her tall, graceful figure, clad in simple black, with the gray curls clustering over the placid brow, is greeted with blessings from her humble neighbors wherever it is seen.

She, too, is waiting.

THE END.

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